the weekly
# Standard

SEPTEMBER 21, 1998

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AMONG THE PORNOGRAPHERS
MATT LABASH

# STARR'S HOME RUN

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The Audit Bureau Member

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# The Worst Pro-Clinton Talking Point

The Starr report is so devastatingly thorough in corroborating every damning detail of Monica Lewinsky's testimony that the possible defenses of the president's behavior have shrunk almost to the vanishing point. In fact, rather than deny Clinton's immorality and illegality, David Kendall was reduced last Friday to arguing that the punishment should fit the crime and that it's a disproportionate response to seek the president's removal from office. This was the best the president's attorney could do.

And amateurs didn't do nearly as well. House Democrats who wanted to carry water for the president last week—and there still were a few dozen of them—all offered variations on the theme of "fairness"—i.e., that the president should get an early peek at the Starr report. This sudden mania for Marquis of Queensberry rules reached its unintentionally comic peak not when Rep. Jim "Phone-Tap" McDermott compared his colleagues to a lynch mob but when Rep. Mel Watt of North Carolina argued that Bill Clinton should be receiving the same level of due-process protection as Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh received during his trial. The implicit comparison of the president to a terrorist murderer—by one of his own defenders!—was astonishing.

But even Watt's rhetorical ineptitude wasn't the worst pro-Clinton talking point of the week. The Scrapbook bestows that distinction on the president himself for whining at a Coral Gables, Fla., fund-raiser: "I've tried to do a good job taking care of this country even when I haven't taken such good care of myself and my family."

This is the hoary "I've been working too hard to behave" defense, not heard in public life since Marion Barry took off to a holistic spa in 1996 to dry out, blaming his personal woes on "unrelenting commitment, dedication and hard work" for the people of Washington, D.C. Of course, if hard work really is the root of the problem, there's an easy solution: early retirement.

## The Best Footnote

Suspicious White House reporters who have long parsed every jot and tittle of presidential speech have been utterly vindicated by the Starr report. The man whose name gave us the adjective "Clintonian," it turns out, is an expert parser of his own sentences. The report's footnote 1128, The Scrapbook's personal favorite, provides a snapshot of the president, under oath, meditating on the meaning of the verb *is*. Here is the footnote in full:

> 1128. In claiming that this statement was true, the President was apparently relying on the same tense-based distinction he made during the Jones deposition. See Clinton 8/17/98 GJ at 59-61 ("It depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is. If the—if he—if 'is' means is and never has been, that is not—that is one thing. If it means there is none, that was a completely true statement. . . . Now, if someone had asked me on that day, are you having any kind of sexual relations with Ms. Lewinsky, that is, asked me a question in the present tense, I would have said no. And it would have been completely true.")

## Remember Ken Bacon?

Before you skip to the dirty parts of the Starr report (The Scrapbook assumes that, thanks to Al Gore's "information superhighway," you have a personal copy by now), there is a fascinating bit in the introduction called "current status of the investigation." It makes clear that last week's report on possible impeachable offenses by the president is hardly the end of the independent counsel's work.

"Additional events" are under investigation, including "possible perjury and obstruction of justice relating to former White House volunteer Kathleen Willey" as well as "the possible misuse of the personnel records of Pentagon employee Linda Tripp." Hmmm. Last summer, the Pentagon inspector general's investigation on the illegal release of Tripp's confidential files to *New Yorker* reporter Jane Mayer by Defense spokesman Ken



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Bacon and his then-deputy Cliff Bernath was mysteriously side-tracked. Maybe Starr's prosecutors are about to fry some bacon.

## The New McCurry

Let us recall now George Will's maxim that staffs, over time, take on the characteristics of their bosses. Back in February, Republican prosecutor Joe diGenova charged that he and his wife, Victoria Toensing (another Republican prosecutor), were being investigated by private eyes tied to the Clinton White House. Deputy press secretary Joe Lockhart, after checking with Clinton's lawyers, denied this, asserting that no one connected to the president had "hired or authorized any private investigator to look into the background" of the couple.

But that—no surprise—turned out to be untrue. Soon the White House was forced to issue another statement, this one acknowledging that Clinton snoops had indeed been digging for dirt on diGenova and Toensing—but only through clean, public channels. Explained Lockhart in a priceless interview with the *Washington Post* last week, "Everyone assumes the lawyers screwed me and hung me out to dry. That's not really the case." Rather, he faults himself for not asking the lawyers enough questions! "I do not believe I intentionally misled reporters, but I take responsibility for the fact they *were* misled."

There is only one word for this kind of reasoning: Clintonian, to the marrow. So as we remember George Will, let us also remember Michael Dukakis, who in 1988 introduced us to that most useful Greek proverb: The fish rots from the head down. The stench at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave. only gets worse.

## Stanley Fish, Pro-Lifer

An audience of 200 mostly liberal professors got a bit of a shock at the recent convention of the American Political Science Association in Boston. Duke University's Stanley Fish, the well-known left-wing social and literary critic, expressly disavowed support for "abortion rights" and chastised the "pro-choice" movement for refusing to acknowledge the fact that abortion takes the life of an innocent human being.

Fish, whose advocacy of "deconstructionism" and other fashionable causes has earned him iconic status in much of the academy, made his rather unfashionable remarks in response to criticism of his earlier writings on the subject by Princeton political theorist and constitutional scholar Robert George.

George took Fish to task for comments in a 1996 article in *First Things* asserting that the pro-life view depends on "religious conviction," while the pro-choice position appeals to "scientific facts." "If the issue is to be settled purely on the basis of scientific inquiry into when a new human being comes into existence," George observed, "then the pro-choice position simply collapses." Fish's response: "Professor George is right, and he is right to have corrected me." Fish went on to say that the pro-choice movement has decided to ignore the facts of life before birth now that science and technology make clear that the being killed by abortion is a human being.



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## Married to the Mob?

Eugene Methvin repeats the same old lies, falsehoods, and unsubstantiated accusations and adds a few new ones about the Laborers' International Union of North America, our internal reform efforts, and our general president Arthur A. Coia ("A Corrupt Union and the Mob," Aug. 31). These charges have been the rallying cry of anti-union extremists since our Oversight Agreement was implemented.

I could correct every false statement in Methvin's article, but it would be a waste of time and space. However, there is one issue I would like to address. I attended the same July 24, 1996, congressional hearing Methvin references, and I wonder if he was in the same room. Ron Fino, who Methvin claims appeared "at some great personal risk," had previously provided the supermarket tabloid the *Globe* with a picture of himself to run with a story about O.J. Simpson and the mob. Hardly an unknown face, Fino and his hooded entrance and subsequent testimony turned the hearing into a three-ring circus.

I seriously question how Methvin can honestly believe that the Laborers' Oversight Agreement with the Department of Justice was a "sweetheart deal." Even Rep. Bill McCollum concluded at the hearings that there was "no evidence that Justice Department prosecutors were improperly influenced by White House officials" in negotiating the agreement.

The Laborers' instituted an Ethics and Disciplinary Code more than three and a half years ago that holds all members to strict standards of conduct. It ensures every member equal rights, full democratic participation in union matters, freedom of speech and assembly, safeguards against improper disciplinary action, the right to all pertinent information, and full and impartial enforcement of members' rights.

Any and all allegations of wrongdoing are fully investigated and prosecuted, if warranted, by our independent officers, who are former federal prosecutors and FBI officials invited by the union and approved by the government to oversee the process.

FBI and Justice Department officials and members of Congress have praised the Laborers' reform programs as innovative, ground-breaking, and "a model for future reform efforts." They are responsible for more than 450 investigations and have led to more than 150 individuals' leaving the union. Those are the real facts about the Laborers' internal reform.

The Laborers' unique Oversight Agreement is working and working well. It's time for Methvin to let this innovative reform process continue to make this the cleanest, fairest, and most democratic union for its members.

LINDA L. FISHER
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
LABORERS' INTERNATIONAL UNION
OF NORTH AMERICA
WASHINGTON, DC

The problem of workers trapped in labor unions that are little more than appendages of organized crime is important, but it is only a subset of the larger problem of workers trapped in unions, period. For every member of the Laborers' International Union of North America who is being fleeced to fill the coffers of the mob, there are hundreds more who are being fleeced to fund union actions for or against ballot initiatives, or fleeced just to fund high living for the officials of "their" union.

The root of all this is the fact that the relationship between worker and union is not contractual. Workers do not, singly or jointly, contract for services over a given period of time and at an agreed price with a union. Instead, because of the National Labor Relations Act, an egregiously authoritarian relic of the New Deal, workers and unions have politically defined relationships. The law states that if a majority of workers in a "bargaining unit" votes for representation by a union, that union then becomes the exclusive bargaining agent for all of the workers—and remains so indefinitely.

No consumer would voluntarily enter into a service contract like that. But unions desire to operate outside of the free-market realm of voluntary consent and competition. The law, by blocking the emergence of a market for the service of representing workers, allows unions to take those whom they represent for granted. The kind of corruption about which Eugene Methvin writes could not long continue if the law protected the rights of workers to say "No more!" and search for another union.

GEORGE C. LEEF
EAST LANSING, MI

## Yeltsin, Historical Giant

David Brooks correctly points out that Russia's present-day difficulties have their wellspring in deeply rooted political and cultural decay rather than economic mismanagement and dislocation ("Boris and the Economists," Sept. 7). Indeed, the Russian economic problems we hear so much about in the Western press are mainly a reflection, or symptom, of this more fundamental political and cultural problem.

I witnessed this personally as a Russian policy analyst for a large research foundation. The Russian government officials whom I dealt with were, by and large, former Communist party apparatchiks who possessed no understanding of economics but who nonetheless had an earthy and instinctive appreciation of Mother Russia and all her attendant political dysfunctions. Consequently, they were—and still are—wedded to the ways of the old order and thus constitutionally incapable of exercising the type of political leadership necessary to bring Russia out of her present-day morass



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and into the 21st century.

Yeltsin, by background and inclination, is one such apparatchik, of course. And so it is not surprising that, in many respects, he has failed as a leader. What is remarkable though is how, in spite of his past, and in spite of his country's past, and with very little cooperation from his colleagues, he has managed to steer Russia in a democratic and free-market direction.

It is easy to criticize Yeltsin. But the question is: Could anyone else, working within the context of Russian politics and history, have done better? The answer is no, because no reform-minded Russian politician would have had the political wherewithal and ability that Yeltsin had to push through fundamental reforms.

For this reason, as Brooks notes, history will remember the first democratically elected Russian president as a political giant, who, at a critical time in Russia's history, beat back the Communists, initiated long-overdue reforms, and bought his country much-needed time to recover from decades of socialist wreckage. As a result, Russian capitalism and Russian democracy are now inevitable.

The economists who bestow advice on Russian policymakers are supremely confident only because the economics of reform are indisputable. Private-property rights must be protected; state subsidies to oligarchic corporate behemoths must end; the currency must be stabilized; the tax code must be simplified; and Western business expertise and investment must be courted, not shunned.

Yes, Russia is in "crisis." But, in a very real sense, she has been so for more than 80 years. Seen this way, from the vantage of the Russian people, today's crisis is nothing new. Russia will survive as it always has—in fitful and spasmodic convulsions of progress and regression. It is something to which we in the West had better get accustomed.

JOHN R. GUARDIANO
ARLINGTON, VA

## A FOREIGN-POLICY WINDOW

You are right to point to the crying need for Republicans to formulate a "coherent alternative" in the area of foreign policy ("Foreign Policy and the Republican Future," Sept. 7). Unfortunately, your editorial takes us only part way towards framing such a policy and realizing a "huge opportunity for Republicans."

Yes, we need military strength, but not "more for everything," as you suggest. Instead, we need a very strategic, diversified, rapid-response military built on the Marines and a revitalized CIA. In addition, we must foster both democracy and development. These two principles should be foreign extensions of a domestic policy that honors the Reagan legacy—decentralization, local initiative, and reliance on private entrepreneurship. At the local level, democracy, development, and both private and public entrepreneurship go hand in hand.

If Republicans do not grab this opportunity to redefine foreign policy and run with it, then it is just a matter of time before the Democrats do so. Their allies in the liberal international foundations and non-governmental organizations are already emphasizing democracy and development in a number of developing countries under the label of "building civil society."

PETER BEARSE
GLOUCESTER, MA

## RED RADIO

Your reference to "Morning Sedition" brought forward memories of when my friends and I referred to NPR's equally egregious evening broadcast as "All Things Com-Sympered" (SCRAPBOOK, "NPR, in from the Cold," Aug. 31). The male newsreaders have always been particularly annoying, whiny, and tentative, clearly from the Alan Alda school of broadcasting.

THOMAS H. NEALE
WASHINGTON, DC

## GODLESS GENERATION X

Victorino Matus gives me a glimmer of hope that perhaps the rudderless Generation X may at last find its way ("Dear Daughter, Dear Dad," Sept. 7). That a God-shaped void exists in each of us and is longing to be fulfilled is certainly self-evident. But in today's twisted, materialistic society, who will show us how to fill it when even those entrusted to that task by their sacred vows lack the will and knowledge to do it?

Michael Novak's book answers that question. I am particularly proud of Novak because I, like him, am a Slovak-American. I am blessed with my immigrant father's wisdom, faith, and insight, and cannot imagine growing up without it, although I see the tragic consequences every day of people who have. The current opinion-poll morality being practiced by our moral leader in the White House is but one sordid example.

GEORGE BEDNARIK JR.
SHELBY TOWNSHIP, MI

## CLINTON MUST STAY

I have a longer memory than most conservative talk-show hosts nowadays, so I'm shocked by your editorial, since I remember President Ronald Reagan's refusal to admit that he had done the unthinkable by selling 5,500 TOW and Hawk rockets to Iran ("Clinton Must Go," Aug. 31). Iran was the same terrorist state that only a few years before had blown up 241 U.S. Marines without consequence. When Reagan eventually went on TV, he did not apologize to the families of the dead Marines.

Compared with this, the Clinton affair is peanuts. You know it, I know it, and the American people know it.

PHILLIP WEISSBURG
SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO, CA

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# Casual

## Saved by The Beasts

When people from my state are asked where we're from, we always answer, "Jersey." A cab driver once tried to pin me down on this. Bostonians, Chicagoans, and New Yorkers all name their city proudly, he said, even if they're really from Brookline or Libertyville or Westchester County. What's wrong with the denizens of Atlantic City, Trenton, Bayonne, Newark? Plenty of outsiders have heard of those places, but the people who come from them are no more apt to claim their home town than if they sprang from Manahawkin or Howell or Ocean Gate. There's nothing for it, I explained. Certain names leave a bad taste in your mouth, and others draw a blank stare. Either way, we learn to lie low and identify ourselves by our state.

I come from a town of 7,303 called Toms River. We're an hour north of Atlantic City and an hour and a half south of New York. To the west are the Pine Barrens and to the east is the ocean. We're nobody's suburb. It used to be that if you said you were from Toms River, the reaction was, "Oh yeah, I think I've heard of that," accompanied by a vague nod. And those who really knew the name recognized it only from Joe McGuinness's best-seller, *Blind Faith*, the true story of how Robert Marshall, a Toms River businessman and prominent socialite, had his wife murdered for the insurance money. This produced our very own O.J. Simpson trial, which unmasked a man of standing as a cold-blooded murderer.

I remember my seventh-grade science teacher stopping class to announce that the verdict was in (Marshall sits on death row to this day). I was 12 and already knew the meaning of "premeditated murder." It was definitely exciting, though not the kind of publicity the chamber of commerce could use. Things didn't get any better when the made-for-TV special came out, with Marshall played by Mr. Vega$ himself, Robert Urich.

Then there was the Kathy Weinstein tragedy. A few years ago, Weinstein, a schoolteacher, was carjacked in broad daylight in the parking lot of a Toms River mall. She was later found murdered. The details surrounding her death were chilling—police found a tape recorder she'd turned on during the ordeal, which had captured her desperate attempt to talk the abductor into sparing her. This wasn't good for town spirit, either. So whenever I was asked, the answer was always "Jersey."

But all those horrible associations were buried on August 29, when the boys of Toms River won the Little League World Series. Representing the United States, the "Beasts From The East" destroyed Japan in a 12-9 slugfest in Williamsport, Pa., and Toms River became an overnight sensation. Everyone was talking about our town, from national news broadcasts to talk shows across the country. Our victory even made the front page of the *New York Times* (just above the fold). And on *Rosie*, the players were given personalized jackets, baseball equipment, and a standing ovation.

I went home last weekend and found banners saluting the team in every corner of the town, from store windows to schools to bars. The local radio stations played songs like Springsteen's "Glory Days" over and over. When town officials threw a parade for the team, 40,000 people lined Route 37. And for just a moment, everybody came together behind our ballplayers—never mind that they're 11 and 12 years old.

The sense of triumph was the greater because New Jersey has no baseball or football team to root for and normally must squabble over the Yankees, Mets, and Phillies, as well as the Giants and Eagles. Okay, the Jets too. Now we can boast about our very own team. My mother's friends don't normally watch baseball, but they couldn't stop saying how cute little Joe Franceschini is and how studious some of the other players are; and they lapped up the fact that one of the kids is an altar boy. The Sunday sermon opened with, "How 'bout those kids from Toms River!" and the congregation broke into wild applause.

In short, it was a historic event for the town. In a moment, we went from being "the place where so-and-so was murdered" to "home of the Little League World Champions." It's a transformation some cities are fortunate enough to experience and others can only envy. Chicago, for instance, used to be known primarily for Al Capone, but is now associated with Michael Jordan. Fall River, Mass., on the other hand, still hasn't been the scene of an exciting event since Lizzie Borden was tried for the axe-murder of her parents, and as a result it still has about it the whiff of notoriety.

I ran into an acquaintance a few days ago, and he happened to ask me where I was from. This time I said with confidence, "Toms River—as in the Little League." And he nodded with a look of familiarity and congratulated me.

**Victorino Matus**



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# CASE CLOSED

He has known this day would eventually come. He has not cared. At last, it has come, and he still does not care. He will stay clawed to his White House desk until his fingers are bloody stumps—and until the nation's expectations for its leader are similarly reduced and wounded. He would sooner have his conduct exposed as criminal and degenerate than lose his hold on office. And to maintain that hold, to help America deceive itself that the conduct is so much harmless "old news," Bill Clinton now encourages us to concentrate our minds on the state of his soul. Come along with him, please, he asks, as he travels "quite a journey": a trip through the quasi-spiritual, easy-virtue psychobabble of repeated public "apologies."

Clinton has "repented," he says. He has a "broken spirit." He has renounced "pride and anger." He will no longer "excuse" or "compare" or "blame" or "complain." By such sacrifice and self-abnegation, the president believes, or wants us to believe, some "good can come of this for our country."

**BILL CLINTON'S "REPENTANCE" IS MOTIVATED EXCLUSIVELY BY A DETERMINATION TO RETAIN POWER. IT IS INSINCERE. IT IS FALSE.**

And what is the "good" he has in mind? Amnesia.

Monica Lewinsky, Clinton argued in Florida last Wednesday, is "not what America is about." America, remember, is about HMOs and school reform and gun control. America, in other words, is "about" his administration's commitment to "the public's business," which he now promises to pursue anew. If only we will relieve him, by "forgiveness," of any real practical responsibility for an episode more disgusting—and cloaked in greater mendacity—than any other in our presidency's history.

At Clinton's private meeting with his cabinet this past Thursday, health and human services secretary Donna Shalala shocked the room by openly questioning his latest pleas for mercy. You seem to be suggesting, she incredulously told the president, that the beauty of your policy-wonkery is adequate compensation for the wretchedness of your personal behavior—that you should survive in office, that is, no matter what, simply because you are right on the issues. Yes, the president reportedly rebuked Shalala, that is exactly what I'm suggesting. John F. Kennedy won the 1960 election, he explained, only because the nation remained ignorant of his true character. It was a just result.

And so it will be a just result, in Clinton's theology, if he evades impeachment by inducing the country to forget what it already knows about *his* character. His "repentance" is motivated exclusively by a determination to retain power. It is insincere. It is false.

As is the president's solemn vow to get "to the rock-bottom truth of where I am and where we all are." Truth is Bill Clinton's last concern; he still defies it. Even before Kenneth Starr's 445-page impeachment referral to Congress was made public last Friday, the president's attorneys were releasing an extensive memorandum purporting to rebut what the independent counsel's meticulously corroborated evidence proves beyond a shadow of a doubt: that the president obstructed justice and tampered with witnesses and committed multiple perjuries, all in an effort to conceal a lurid, adulterous sexual relationship.

Clinton is innocent of such charges, his attorneys essentially contend, because—so far as law and politics are concerned—there was no such relationship to conceal. "The term 'sexual relationship,'" they write, "like sexual affair, has no definitive meaning." The president, they insist, was testifying "accurately," in public and under oath in court, when he refused to acknowledge a dalliance with the intern. Only intercourse, Clinton told the Lewinsky grand jury August 17, constitutes "sex" the way "most ordinary Americans" understand the word. Nothing else he did with the



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young lady—masturbation in a White House sink, "oral-anal contact," all the other business detailed in the Starr referral—is "sex." The question whether Clinton is or was having sex with Lewinsky "depends on what the meaning of the word 'is' is," he asserted at one point in his deposition. The question whether he was ever alone with her "depends on how you define 'alone.'"

This remains the official position of the Clinton administration, attested to, on White House letterhead dated September 11, 1998, by presidential counsel Charles F. C. Ruff. Our executive branch, in short, continues to organize itself around a spectacular lie.

That it is all just a lie is news to almost no one in Washington. All but the last few die-hard Clinton believers in the capital fell off the turnip truck some weeks ago; the basic, factual record of the Lewinsky scandal was near-universally accepted here already. What Kenneth Starr has done—suffering relentless White House assaults on his reputation with a dogged loyalty to mission that looks positively heroic in retrospect—is add a devastating measure of finality and weight and *obligation* to the city's judgment against the president. The charges are not just true. They are not just serious. They demand the action of an impeachment proceeding.

And yet, even as it accepts this move as inevitable and necessary, Washington tortures itself with doubt and gloom. L'affaire Lewinsky, Congress and the editorial pages tell themselves, has become a national crisis, a tragedy, even. Its effects will be uniformly baleful: The private lives of public officials will be subject to prying and poking forever. And the people still support Bill Clinton. Are we really to banish him from office—against their will? Should "elite opinion" be enough to "undo" a popular democracy's presidential election?

Yes. If need be, yes. Impeachment is a sober matter. But it is neither a crisis nor a tragedy. The heavens will not fall if Bill Clinton's vice president becomes president. The 1996 election will not be thus "undone"; that is what vice presidents are for. The nation will lose nothing much at all if a few adulterers are prevented from advancing in our politics in the future. And our democracy's public-opinion polls do not determine our president's fitness for office in the present. Democracy's elected representatives do that—on a basis of careful consideration and conscience, and through orderly steps and means anticipated by our founders and written deliberately into our Constitution.

The decision is really quite simple. Bill Clinton is asking Congress to judge acceptable a president revealed to the world as a lout and liar and criminal. Congress must refuse the request and remove him.

*—David Tell, for the Editors*

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# Impeach Now

**by William Kristol**

"Get on with it." Sound advice about impeaching the president from Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the Democratic senator from New York.

"Listen," Moynihan continued, in a television appearance three days before Kenneth Starr sent his report to Congress, "we can have this all behind us in six weeks' time if we just get on with it. . . . You get that report from Starr, let the Judiciary Committee in the House decide whether . . . there have been impeachable offenses, and let the House vote. Then get it over to us [in the Senate], and let us decide. . . . We have nothing more important to do in the nation's interest."

As of now, however, House Republicans aren't following the senator's advice. Instead, Speaker Newt Gingrich seems determined to move at a snail's pace. He told fellow Republicans last Thursday that there could be a resolution to start an impeachment inquiry before the House adjourns in October. But, he cautioned, impeachment hearings in the Judiciary Committee would not begin until next year, and an actual committee vote on impeachment probably wouldn't come until June. Only then would the matter reach the House floor. The speaker pointed out that it took Peter Rodino's Judiciary Committee many months of labor before voting articles of impeachment in 1974. And Republicans, he said, should above all beware of looking hasty or impetuous in dealing with Bill Clinton.

Gingrich, of course, is bending over backwards to appear "statesmanlike," after a year of to-ing and fro-ing about how to handle the president. He'd like to postpone any significant action until after Election Day, made nervous by polls showing that the public is still hesitant about impeachment. Yet a go-slow approach may in fact not be in the short-term partisan interest of Republicans. And it's certainly not in their long-term interest, which is to show they are a morally



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serious and politically courageous party that can lead the nation.

Most important, of course, a lengthy process is not in the interest of the country. Gingrich's position, though it may appear "responsible," does not constitute statesmanship. It is, rather, a simulacrum of statesmanship. The truly statesmanlike thing to do under the circumstances is to address the question of Clinton with dispatch. Given the present situation, it is precisely a false judiciousness and an unwarranted commitment to a stately and "deliberate" pace that is irresponsible.

Why? Because delay would leave the country weakened for an unnecessarily long time. Energy in the executive, as Hamilton noted, is a key component of good government. And as long as the cloud of impeachment hangs over the president, we cannot have an energetic executive. It therefore falls to Congress to act energetically to restore a strong executive—through the constitutional means of succession.

Gingrich's Rodino comparison is particularly inapt. Over the last seven months, the independent counsel has done the type of work that the Rodino committee itself undertook in 1974. From January 1998 until last week, Congress deferred to the independent counsel, allowing him to uncover the facts. Gingrich was a strong advocate of such deference, saying in April that Congress's job was only "to prepare to receive a potential report." The House could have held hearings as early as February. Indeed, some of us argued that it should have, rather than shift responsibility to the independent counsel. But shift responsibility it did. So Starr did the work, and he did it well: meticulously, scrupulously, even bravely, given the onslaught against him. The notion that what is now needed is a dawdling, redundant process in the House is absurd.

The fact is it should take the Judiciary Committee no more than a couple of weeks to review Starr's report, including its supporting documents, as well as any White House rebuttals. Then, if it wishes, the committee can interrogate Starr and the president's lawyers. The committee should then debate and vote on articles of impeachment, sending them to the full House. Then, the House should debate for another couple of weeks and vote on impeachment before adjourning in late October. The Senate would then prepare for its trial.

Gingrich has observed that we should "take a deep breath and allow the facts to lead us." Fine. But such an inhalation need not take months. All the relevant facts and arguments will soon be available to every member of Congress. "In a grave matter like this," says Sen. Robert Byrd, the old West Virginia Democrat, "a little pause to reflect" is in order. Certainly. But due reflection hardly requires months of national paralysis, vacillation, and impotence.

**Newt Gingrich**

Richard Gephardt, the House minority leader, asserted last week that whether to impeach and convict a president is the second most important decision Congress is called on to make—second only to deciding whether to go to war. That is correct. But the Gulf War debate, widely regarded as a high point in modern congressional history, took only days. Furthermore, as in the run-up to the Gulf War, we have had many months of public debate and speech-making. Does anyone honestly believe that congressmen will be able to cast a more informed vote next June than next month?

I don't. Sen. Moynihan doesn't. And it's hard to believe Newt Gingrich really does. If support among Democrats erodes, President Clinton will perhaps do the right thing and resign. But we know he won't go easily. This president cannot be importuned or beseeched to resign. He must be shown the door. The only way to do that is to make clear to him how little support he has. And the best way to do that, in turn, is to get on with it. The Judiciary Committee should vote articles of impeachment within a month. The full House should act immediately thereafter. And the Senate—if Clinton is still refusing to leave office—should proceed expeditiously with its trial.

Al Gore for president.

*William Kristol is editor and publisher of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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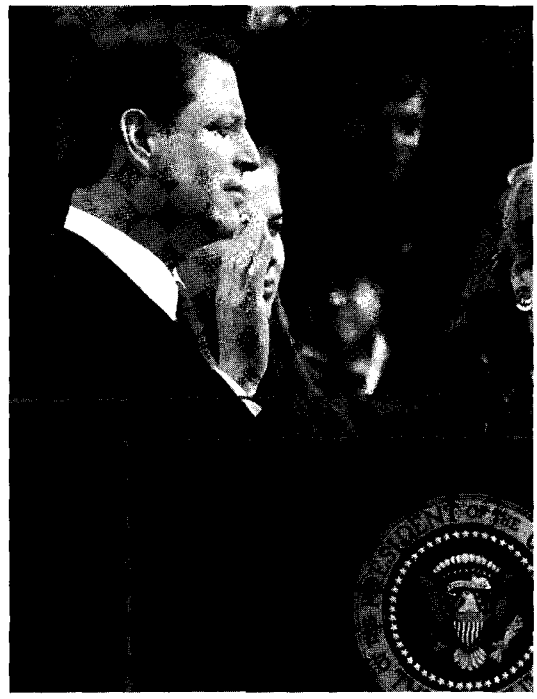
# PRESIDENT GORE?

## by Tucker Carlson

THERE IS A POINT AT WHICH EVEN James Carville runs out of spin. Until recently, that point existed only in theory. Then, last week, Ken Starr submitted his report on the Lewinsky investigation to Capitol Hill and the normally talkative consultant seemed to run out of things to say. So, Carville was asked the day after the report arrived, who do you think will be in the Gore administration? Carville didn't even muster a dismissive chortle. "Call somebody else," he said.

Carville is a Clinton partisan, so his unwillingness to talk about the possible aftermath of the president's impeachment or resignation is not surprising. What is surprising is how willing some Gore advisers have been to speculate (provided they're not identified by name) about what will happen if Gore becomes president before the year 2000. Gore is famous for his loyalty to Clinton and for his refusal, even in private, to criticize his boss. "For four years I was with [Gore] as much as anyone," says a recently departed aide, "and I never heard him say a thing about what he really thought of Clinton, even when I asked him leading questions. Nothing." Still, there is evidence of hairline cracks in the Clinton-Gore relationship, beginning with their views on foreign policy.



AP/World Wide Photos

During his years in the Senate, Gore often boasted of his extensive knowledge of world affairs, and he is widely thought to be unimpressed with Clinton's scattershot, inattentive, and weak foreign policy. If Gore were to become president, says someone who has helped form his positions, "you'd see a tougher foreign policy. Gore is more interested in foreign policy, more inclined to use military force." Gore is said to be particularly dismayed by the administration's decision to suspend vigorous inspections of Iraqi chemical-weapons sites. "You have to interpret the rolling of the eyes," says a close friend who has talked to Gore about the subject recently. "I've seen eye-rolling."

A number of advisers claim Gore is also dissatisfied with the ineffectual performance of Madeleine Albright. "If Madeleine Albright remained secretary of state" during a Gore administration, says one, "she'd be even more symbolic and flatulent than she is now." Fearful of criticism from organized feminists (who pushed Clinton into appointing Albright over George Mitchell in the first place), Gore probably wouldn't go looking for a new secretary of state. Instead, he'd likely bring in a more hawkish national security adviser—or at least fire the present one. "There's a vast gap between Sandy Berger's view of the world and his," says a Gore intimate.

Most other high-level Clinton appointees would be safe in the first months of a Gore administration. When Clinton is forced to leave office prematurely, says someone who knows the vice president, "it's going to be such a traumatic event, it will reinforce Gore's native caution. I doubt he'd go out willy-nilly firing cabinet members." Nor, says another Gore aide, could he afford to: "There are a lot of politics behind the cabinet. You're not going to [replace commerce secretary William] Daley because of Chicago, [energy secretary Bill] Richardson just got there, and you don't knock off Madeleine [Albright] because you don't want to offend the women's groups. Within the next year, people will start to leave on their own." Treasury secretary Robert Rubin is rumored to be on his way out already, to be replaced perhaps by Jim Johnson, departing head of Fannie Mae. As for Janet Reno, says someone who works for Gore, "now that she's investigating him, she's got the safest job in town."

Within the White House, President Gore's staff would likely include a number of familiar names. Gore has been criticized by Democratic strategists, fundraisers, and campaign consultants for refusing to enlarge the tiny group of longtime advisers who surround him, few of whom directly challenge his judgment. "I've told him," says a Democratic operative, "'If you're going to win, you've got to expand your circle.'" So far, Gore has ignored the advice, and if he becomes president at least some of his choices for senior staff will be predictable. Former chiefs of staff



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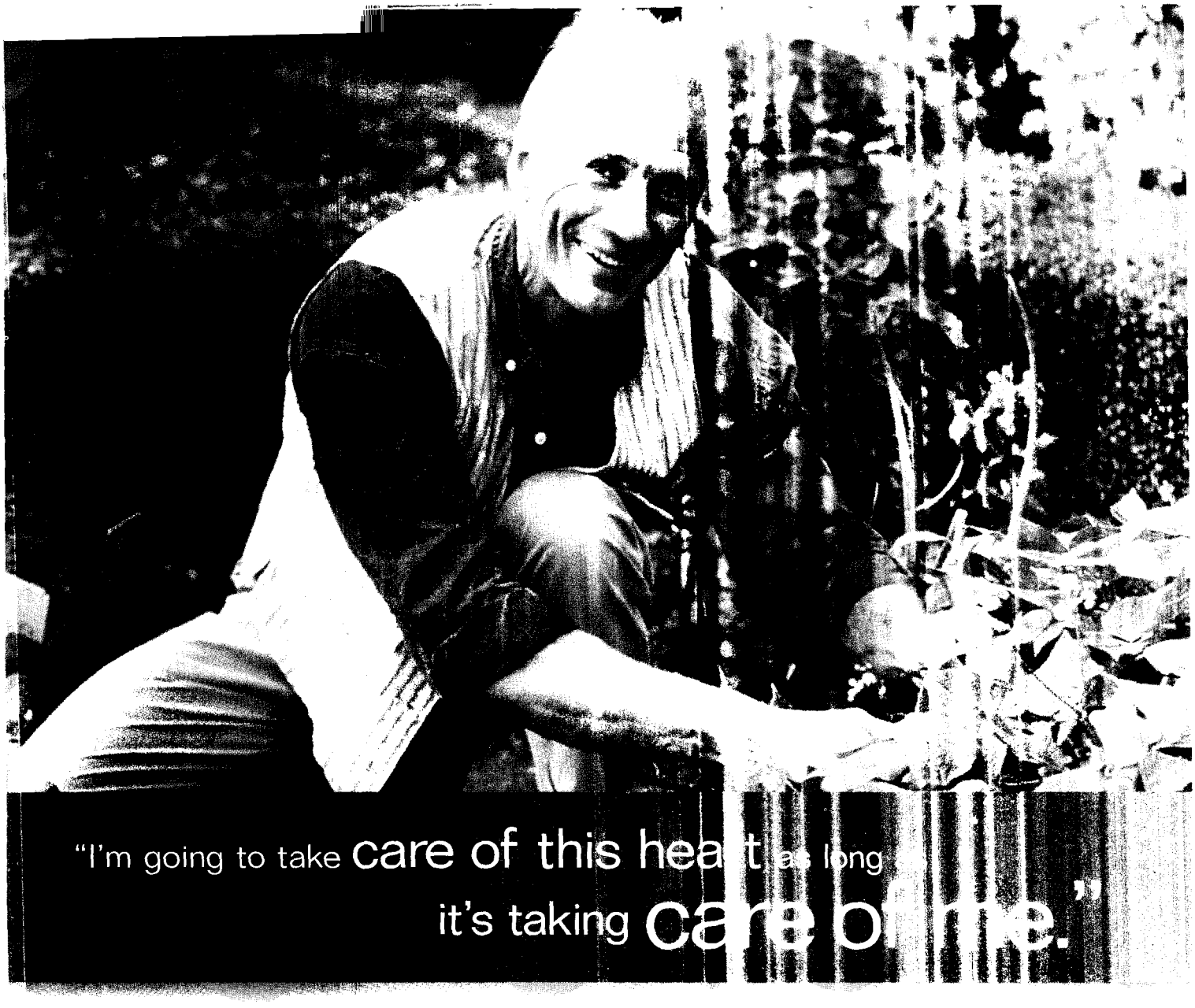


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Peter Knight, Jack Quinn, and Roy Neel are sure to be asked to return (Neel as presidential chief of staff), as is Elaine Kamarck, a former *Newsday* columnist and Progressive Policy Institute fellow who spent five years as Gore's social-policy adviser. Larry Harrington, a former aide to Gore on Capitol Hill and the deputy manager of his 1988 presidential bid, is a strong bet for White House political director. Frank Hunger, meanwhile, an official at the Justice Department who was married to Gore's late sister Nancy, could become the new Bruce Lindsey. "Hunger would certainly become the consigliere, which he sort of is now," says a Gore watcher.

It's easy to predict the names in a Gore administration because there aren't many of them to choose from. Gore is famously uncomfortable with other people, and even after a lifetime in politics, he has a notably short list of FOAs. Former New York congressman Tom Downey, for instance, is invariably described in news accounts as among Gore's closest personal confidants—a description Downey himself apparently finds strange. "If I'm one of his best friends," Downey told a Gore aide a few years ago, "it doesn't say much about him."

The most often asked question, needless to say, is, Who will be the Veep's veep? Conventional wisdom puts Sen. Dianne Feinstein at the top of the list, but hardly anyone who actually knows Gore considers her a likely choice. "Nonsense," says one of the vice president's oldest advisers. Much as Feinstein might help Gore in California in 2000, the adviser points out, "her husband is a real-estate person. Successful real-estate people can't withstand the scrutiny of daylight." Affable former congressman Bill Richardson, whose name is also mentioned as a possible vice-presidential candidate, seems equally unlikely. Not only does Richardson come from an electorally insignificant state—New Mexico—there's the problem of his infamous career-planning breakfast with Monica Lewinsky at the Watergate. Dick Gephardt might be a good choice, says one Gore adviser: "He brings you labor, he brings you the Midwest, there are no ethical problems. I think he's only dated one woman in his life." The only problem: He and Gore have had "hatred" for each other since the 1988 campaign. "Maybe if Gray Davis wins in California, Gore will pick him."

Maybe not. For the moment, Gore himself isn't shedding any light on the matter. Just last week, Clinton remarked to a friend how pleased he has been by the vice president's enthusiastic professions of loyalty, and he has reason to be. Since January, Gore has been more supportive of Clinton in public than Clinton's own wife. Gore's ingrained, reflexive partisanship probably accounts for much of this. Simple political calculation probably accounts for the rest. "Gore made it clear to me that his relationship with the president was the currency of the realm," says someone who worked for the vice president. Gore takes pains to be present in the White House when Clinton is there, and for years his staff has arranged his schedule around his weekly lunch with the president. "I can't tell you how many times we took the red-eye back from the West Coast so he could be at that lunch," says an aide.

For the past six years, Gore has understood that his power comes from his close relationship with Clinton. Now there is the Starr report. The subject of Clinton's resignation, says a friend of Gore's, has long been taboo around the vice president. "He's very uncomfortable talking about it. If you try to raise it he cuts you off. Not that I've offered to come pack his books"—an offer that may come soon enough.

*Tucker Carlson is a staff writer at* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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# THE REPORT THAT ATE D.C.

**by David Brooks**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 9
LIMBO DAY ONE

The *New York Times* and CNN are reporting that Starr will issue his report Friday, but by midmorning ABC is spreading the word that this is the day. Immediately the rumor mill goes into high gear, about everything from Bill Clinton's taste for macadamia nuts to the likely composition of the Gore administration. As private phone conversations escalate from lively to hysterical, the politicians become increasingly pious and deliberate. Gingrich, Hyde, and Gephardt are leading a bipartisan meeting, and it's as if the press corps is a bunch of records spinning at 45 rpm while the pols are turning at a stately 17. Until the contents of the report are made public, everyone is going around in circles, just at different speeds.

Then comes word that the boxes are on their way to Capitol Hill. A motorcade of boxes! Washington



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erupts as if this were the most exciting thing on earth. Pat Buchanan says on TV, "You cannot get much more drama than this in the nation's capital," which, if true, is a sorry comment on the dull lives we lead here.

People are on the phone, watching TV, and surfing the Internet (the vulgar ones have found the Stain Monica's Dress game) all at the same time, asking one another: Do you think the reports are in plain brown wrappers? Will the people who handle them be wearing those head-to-foot white suits, like workers in a nuclear-power plant? When the boxes are switched to the second van, it looks for a moment as if the bottom of one box will give way, strewing papers everywhere. What tension! But the transfer is completed, and the documents are locked away. The fate of Hillary Clinton's husband is being stored in a building named for Gerald Ford. Somewhere in the netherworld, Richard Nixon is loving this.

The excitement over, the Washington gossip community gets back on the phone to trade rumors and search for news nuggets. Reporters, activists, and staffers are circulating dirty jokes about what's in the report. "God, I love this f— story," a TV newsman confesses. A Hill aide busts into a conversation cluster and remarks with faux sobriety, "This is a moment of national crisis. There is no room for levity." Everybody bursts out laughing.

CNN, thinking it's found an actual event, switches to live coverage of the House floor. Unfortunately the debate is about migratory birds. CNN, which can't cut away too fast without looking like it made a mistake, lingers. Somewhere in the White House, a strategist is telling Clinton to go to Capistrano to apologize to the swallows as part of his Contrition Tour '98.

Meanwhile, on the Senate side, Robert Byrd, father of a thousand West Virginia highways, is suffering an acute case of Lieberman envy. He's waxing philosophic about the times and the mores and Bill Clinton's moral failings. Hearers wonder whether the classics-quoting pork king will find a way to mention Pericles or Caesar crossing the Alps. As it transpires, he doesn't match the rhetorical grandeur of Sen. Moynihan, who's been going around town saying this is a "crisis of the regime." The phrase is brilliantly portentous and vacuous. Also literally untrue. This is no crisis of the American regime, since the Constitution provides for impeachment.

News of Clinton's Florida speech is seeping back. The most moving bit is the sentence, "I've tried to do a good job taking care of this country even when I haven't taken such good care of myself and my family." Presidents who love too much. . . . Meanwhile, on the Metro, the commuters are not talking about the high drama of the day. They're talking about Mark McGwire and their own lives. Out of touch.

### THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 10
### LIMBO DAY TWO

The media are filled with confident and wildly divergent reporting about what's in the Starr report. Who should know better than the Democrats, who are having a conference at the Mayflower Hotel for their business donors? Loretta Sanchez, the California Democrat who beat Bob Dornan, lets us know that everything is going great for her party. According to her, Democratic campaign leader Martin Frost told House Democrats this very morning


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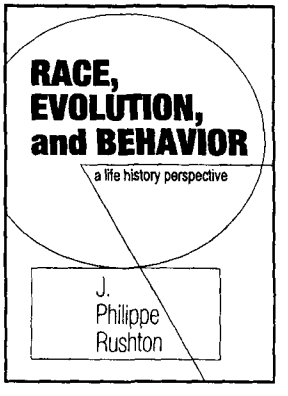


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that they've already as good as won 6 of the 11 seats they need to take back the majority. Sanchez testifies that the Democrats are popular and getting more so. The people are with them on the issues, but the Republicans are trying to distract people from what really matters. "I spoke to some of my Republican colleagues. They are praying and hoping that the issues don't come up," she tells the audience. If this is the way Republicans really talk to her, I'll agree to be locked in a room with Bob Dornan for an hour.

Mark Penn, the very smart pollster who briefs Clinton every week, tells virtually the same sunny story, but in more sophisticated form. Clinton's job approval is as high as ever, at 70 percent. Approval of congressional Democrats is high at 57 percent. On the generic ballot, Americans prefer Democratic congressional candidates to Republicans by 41 percent to 32 percent among all voters and 39 percent to 35 percent among likely voters. Listening to Penn, you'd be amazed any Republican could be elected.

Political wonkery is interrupted by the news the Idaho Republican zealot Helen Chenoweth has admitted she had an affair with a married man that ended 14 years ago. This is a figure all of polite Washington can giggle about. Everyone wants to know which militia he belonged to. It turns out he was her business partner, and their affair was outed by the media. The scene is beginning to look like one of those Last Judgment paintings. All the old adulteries are rising from obscurity. If there were a reporter with any brains, he'd call every member of Congress and say, "I'm working on a story about your private life," and then pause to see what each one confessed. As a Heritage Foundation observer notes, it could be like a Moonie wedding in reverse—a mass divorce in one of the congressional caucus rooms.

**THE STORY IS THAT THE REPORT WILL BE PUT ON FOUR INTERNET SITES, WHICH WILL ALL PROMPTLY CRASH. FORGET ABOUT Y2K.**

Today's rumors are mostly about who is going to get indicted by Starr over the next few weeks. The press corps, however, has more urgent concerns. Its members are all terrified that some competing news organization will get the report before them. The medium-sized newspapers are hypersensitive, as always, about preferential treatment being given to the big boys. The story is that the report will be put on four Internet sites, which will all promptly crash. Forget about Y2K. Another option, used for past document releases, is to ship the report straight to Kinko's, where reporters can pay for their copies. Section 595b of the Independent Counsel Statute settles it: "The IC is to deliver his report to the 19-year-old guy at Kinko's, who will proceed to spill pizza sauce upon it." The Cato Institute will no doubt approve of the privatization of the Congressional Press Offices.

Meanwhile, just to show the serious work of the American people is being taken care of, Republican Bill Thomas of California has introduced H.R. 4522 prohibiting the IRS from taxing baseball fans who catch record-breaking home-run balls and return them to the hitter. Look for a government shutdown over this.

## FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 11
## D-DAY

Is it out yet? Is it out? Everyone is watching the vote on the rule on C-SPAN. Then we hear that Hyde and Conyers are walking over to pick up the report. Purple scissors cut open the boxes, and out come the big three-ring binders. The scramble is on to get the report on the Internet. People are trading Web sites. Only the internal congressional site seems to be functioning well. So crowds gather instead around office televisions.

First comes the "news"—the actual impeachable stuff. David Shuster of Fox and Lisa Myers of NBC seem to be doing the most sophisticated job of getting the information out. Up on Capitol Hill, reporters are surging around members' offices looking for copies. Slowly the nuggets are emerging: The president asked Dick Morris to poll on whether he should tell the truth. The president fed Betty Currie the line about how Monica was stalking him. The president was involved in the Lewinsky affidavit denying their affair. The phone traffic agrees: The perjury charges are rock solid. The rest of the stuff is not quite as strong.

But then around 2 p.m. the tone of the TV coverage and Beltway chatter changes. People have scrolled down to the sex. Candy Crowley reads it out over the air: "On one occasion, the President inserted a cigar into her vagina. On another occasion, she and President inserted a cigar into her vagina. On another occasion, she and the President had brief genital-to-genital contact." Over at CBS, Bob Schieffer is reading the report on the air too. He comes to the beginning of the sex part and seems to stumble. Dan Rather tells him to take a deep breath. Away



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they go. Over at ABC they are too dainty to read the graphic material. Now, too, the White House "pre-buttal" is out. Reminds me of a French Rugby coach who explained his team's rough play by saying, "We wanted to get our retaliation in first."

This is a bad day for America's forests. In office after office, the report is being copied and copied. Phones start ringing as people read each other the startling parts. I call an editor at a New York-based magazine on entirely innocent business. "Uh . . . what . . . uh . . . Oh, sorry, I was reading the report," he answers.

The private matters go on page after page. This, few were prepared for: the detailed, blow by blow, minute by minute, narrative of the pair's intimate moments. Media people face enormous deadline pressures, but they can't stop reading. Says Monica: "We would talk about our childhoods. Talk about current events. I was always giving him my stupid ideas about what I thought should be done in the administration. . . . We'd usually end up, kind of the pillow talk of it, I guess, . . . sitting in the Oval Office." Says the report: "After phone sex late one night, the president fell asleep mid-conversation. . . . According to Ms. Lewinsky, the president said that 'he had never been treated as poorly by anyone else as I treated him.'"

Late in the day, phone traffic is heating up, with people checking out one another's perceptions. The TV news is all heavy breathing, but the phone gossip has it that parts of the report are comparatively weak, like the abuse-of-power section. Some find the report underwhelming. Democratic Hill staffers tell each other that the worst is over. The bottom has been reached. Conservatives are concentrating on the moral stuff. Most are absolutely appalled. The sickness of the relationship. Clinton's odd morality—his weird rules about what he can do, when, with Monica.

The great question is how the masses will respond to the sex narrative. Will the Democratic congressmen read it and be sickened or read it and be outraged that Starr laid it all out? Look for people to fall into utterly different camps, the moralists and the amoralists. The culture war lives.

*David Brooks is a senior editor of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.


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# Gephardt's Moment

**by Fred Barnes**

Since Republicans took control of Congress in 1994, Democrats have pursued a simple strategy in congressional investigations of President Clinton: obstruct, obstruct, obstruct. In 1995, they denounced the Senate Banking Committee probe of the Whitewater scandal as partisan, then impeded its progress. They took their marching orders from White House aides. In 1997, when Republican senator Fred Thompson chaired hearings on campaign-finance abuses, Democrats acted in the same way. Ditto when the House Government Reform and Oversight Committee looked into illegal election fund-raising. But now, as the House Judiciary Committee takes up the impeachment of Bill Clinton, Democrats have promised to be non-partisan and not toe the White House line. Why the change? The reason is Dick Gephardt, the House Democratic leader.

Kevin Chadwick

Gephardt, a strait-laced Baptist from St. Louis, is appalled both at Clinton's philandering and his self-serving apology on August 17. But that is only one of the reasons why he decided Democrats should cease being apologists for the White House. Never fond of Clinton, Gephardt concluded the president was on the verge of leading the Democratic party to an election disaster in November's mid-term election, just as he had in 1994. So the smart thing for House Democrats was to declare their independence from Clinton in hopes of minimizing their vulnerability. Which is what Gephardt did. Also, he believes independent counsel Ken Starr's charges against Clinton are serious, will be taken as such by the public, and should be treated seriously on Capitol Hill.

A week after Clinton's nationally televised speech, Gephardt made his move. The White House had asked Democrats to say in their public appearances that Clinton had apologized fully and thus it was time for Congress and the country to turn to more important matters. Gephardt declined. He insisted impeachment was a possibility, and if it came to that, the House should "do it the right way. . . . We have to, under the Constitution, carefully examine the facts and then make a judgment on whether or not he should be expelled from office." He noted calmly that if Clinton were to be driven from office, "we'll get through this." Gephardt didn't take up the White House complaint that the press is prying too much, and obsessively, into Clinton's private life. He told Ceci Connolly of the *Washington Post* the media scrutiny is "legitimate."

The White House was not pleased. In response, Clinton aides got two allies of Gephardt in organized labor—AFL-CIO president John Sweeney and Gerald McEntee, head of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees—to urge him to back down from his statements. They also prompted Terence McAuliffe, a prominent Democratic fund-raiser, to call Gephardt. Two days later, the minority leader shaved back on his comments, but only slightly. The thrust remained, and he reiterated his "deep desire to do this in a non-partisan way." Last Friday, Gephardt urged Democrats "to go more than halfway to make this a non-partisan process." And he carried two-thirds of House Democrats with him in voting with Republicans to release Starr's report to the public immediately—without giving Clinton a prior peek.

There's more to Gephardt's lurch away from Clinton than one vote and some lofty words. Just ask Rep. John Conyers, the ranking Democrat on the Judiciary Committee. Gephardt feared Conyers and other Democrats were prepared to do Clinton's bidding during impeachment hearings. Given the amount of attention the hearings are bound to get, this would be embarrassing for the party. So he took control away from



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Conyers. He imposed Abbe Lowell, a Washington defense lawyer and active Democrat, on Conyers as the chief minority counsel while impeachment is considered. Conyers was furious and his own chief counsel on the committee, Julian Epstein, all the more so. To tighten his hold, Gephardt privately asked one Judiciary Democrat to serve as his liaison to Rep. Henry Hyde, the committee chairman. And that Democrat quickly informed Hyde.

Meanwhile, Gephardt was one of the first Democrats summoned to the White House when Clinton began his flurry of personal apologies. He joined a small delegation of House Democrats on September 9 who chatted with Clinton over coffee and Danish. During the session, according to Ron Fournier of the Associated Press, he told the president that impeachment was in the air. Gephardt then left the session early to attend a meeting with House speaker Newt Gingrich on impeachment procedures. That meeting represented a new stab at bipartisanship, since he and Gingrich hadn't conferred for several years. Anyway, the early departure irritated Clinton aides, especially because he didn't stop in the White House driveway and say a kind word to reporters about the president's apology.

**GEPHARDT IRRITATED THE WHITE HOUSE WHEN HE DIDN'T SAY A KIND WORD TO REPORTERS ABOUT CLINTON'S APOLOGY.**

All this is tricky business for Gephardt. He's bent on holding the Democratic caucus together while separating it from Clinton. Dozens of the Democrats are uncomfortable with this, preferring to mount a strong defense of the president, and Gephardt has to placate them. One way is by noisily protesting GOP plans for conducting impeachment proceedings as unfair to Clinton. Yet when Rep. Jim McDermott of Washington expressed concern about a Republican lynch mob out to get Clinton, Gephardt balked. His answer was to nick Republicans but also say this: "We are called to be better than sometimes our natures allow us to be. This is not a second election. . . . This is not politics. This is not spinning. This is not polling. This is not a lynch mob. This is not a witch hunt. . . . This is a constitutional test." So far, Gephardt is passing.

*Fred Barnes is executive editor of* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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# DIVORCING THE PRESIDENT

**by Matthew Rees**

*Janesville, Wisconsin*

"I WOULD IMAGINE HIS PLATE is pretty full right now." That's how Lydia Spottswood, a Democrat, politely told me last week that her bid for Congress stands a better chance if Bill Clinton doesn't come to southeast Wisconsin to support her. It's bad news for the president that a Clintonite such as Spottswood would conclude this, especially as the district is hardly a hotbed of conservatism. Les Aspin was the congressman here for over 20 years before Clinton named him secretary of defense in his first cabinet. Voters here not only supported Clinton twice, but also Michael Dukakis over George Bush in 1988. Spottswood only barely lost this seat two years ago to Mark Neumann (who's running for the Senate this year) and now finds herself in a surprisingly close contest with Paul Ryan, a 28-year-old former congressional staffer.

A disciplined, risk-averse candidate, Spottswood saw only political pain in standing by the president. The day after Clinton's August 17 speech, she said she was "very disappointed in him." Asked whether he should resign (this was before the release of the Starr report), she said she didn't want to prejudge anything and pledged, "If it's obvious the president has broken the law, I don't think I'll have much of a choice but to vote to impeach."

That's assuming she makes it to Washington. Her defection is a sign not only that the president's position is precarious, but that even strong Democratic candidates are on the defensive and could lose in November. Spottswood tries to put the best spin on the Clinton story, saying it has "energized" Democratic voters and that it's mostly reporters who ask about it, but she can't hide her frustration. In late August when a group of national political reporters repeatedly questioned her about Clinton, she barked: "President Clinton isn't on the ballot."

Wishful thinking. A few months ago, congressional Democrats were planning to use Republican opposition to a tobacco bill and campaign-finance reform to galvanize voters in the fall elections. But those issues



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have been completely overshadowed. The scandal, sighs Spottswood, has "overwhelmed the national debate about everything. There's nothing else really on the table."

In an ordinary election year, Spottswood would probably have a comfortable lead over Ryan. Not only has she run for the seat once before, she also served eight years on the city council in Kenosha, one of the district's largest cities. Ryan hasn't lived in the district for any extended period of time since high school. But a recent poll showed him trailing by only a statistically insignificant three percentage points.

While twentysomething congressional candidates usually don't fare well, Ryan has a few factors working in his favor. Wisconsin has a tradition of sending spring chickens to Washington (Aspin was 32 when he was elected, Steve Gunderson was 28, and Bill Steiger was just 26). And Ryan has a wealth of Washington experience. He's worked for Republican senators like Bob Kasten and Sam Brownback, as well as for heavyweights Steve Forbes and Bill Bennett (all four have campaigned for him, and Jack Kemp is due for a fund-raiser in October). When Hillary Clinton came to the district in April, she made hay with Ryan's links to conservatives like Bennett, warning her audience against Republicans who "have their chain pulled by some . . . far-right political commentator." Ryan also has an impressive command of local issues, a Clintonesque ability to connect with voters, and an appreciation of fund-raising's importance (he and Spottswood have both raised about $600,000).

Kent Lemon

**Lydia Spottswood**

For all of his Washington experience, though, Ryan has never held elective office, thus complicating Spottswood's effort to tar him as a right-wing troglodyte (the best she could do at a recent forum was to fall back on the hoary charge that the GOP cut the school-lunch program in 1995). Ryan, in other words, has gotten off easy so far. He had no serious opposition in the primary, and Spottswood has yet to run any negative ads. Even more important, the liberal advocacy groups that aired over $800,000 worth of commercials blasting Neumann in 1995-96 have been AWOL.

A street brawl, however, is likely if the race remains close. While Spottswood regularly appeals for positive campaigns, and once broke into tears when a reporter from the *New York Times Magazine* asked her about the nastiness of the effort against Neumann, her sincerity is in doubt. She didn't make any fuss about the barrage of anti-Neumann ads two years ago, and the *New York Times* reporter recounted in his article that Spottswood "told me stories, all apparently baseless, that call into question Neumann's business ethics, even his parenting skills."

What kind of Democrat would Spottswood be on Capitol Hill? On most issues, she sounds like a Gephardt Democrat. Asked about renewing the president's fast-track trade authority, she lays out an array of difficult-to-meet conditions (she's even more skeptical of NAFTA). Earlier this year, she appeared at a labor rally in Racine with striking Textron workers and sounded a distinctly Old Democrat theme, thundering against "the synergy of Wall Street which says one plus one equals three." Not surprisingly, much of Spottswood's support has come from conventional liberal groups such as the AFL-CIO, which endorsed her eight months before the Democratic primary, and EMILY's List, a feminist fund-raising outfit that has given her nearly $100,000.

On social and cultural issues, Spottswood is a mixed bag. She's firmly pro-choice, but changed her mind about partial-birth abortion—she supported the president's veto two years ago but now says she'd vote to override. Her biggest problem may be her strong support for a defeated 1994 referendum that sought to ban handguns in Kenosha. There's a powerful pro-gun constituency in the district—the local General Motors plant shuts down on the first day of deer-hunting season—and Ryan will benefit from a statewide referendum on the ballot in November proposing to add the right to bear arms to the state constitution.

In the end, though, all of these traditional "issues" may not matter much. The scandal has distracted attention from everything Spottswood wants to talk about, and it's not clear she can change the subject. She may try to distance herself and protest otherwise, but increasingly it looks like Bill Clinton is going to be on every ballot this fall.

*Matthew Rees is a staff writer for* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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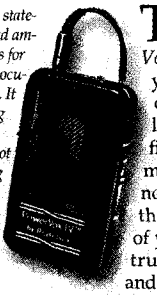

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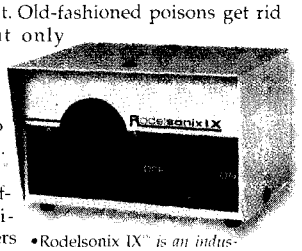


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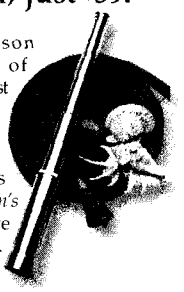

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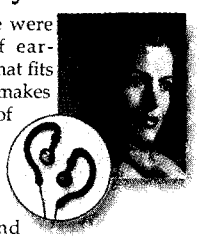

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# Among the Pornographers

**By Matt Labash**

*Editor's note: Because of the subject matter, some material in this article is sexually explicit and may offend some readers.*

Just look at them sitting together, luxuriating in one another's gazes like fat hounds in the sun: Over there, the First Amendment lawyers, with their chalkstripes and barrel cuffs and owlish widow's peaks. There's the professoriat, suited up in seat-cleaving Dockers and itchy tweeds or camouflaging guts in frowzy guayaberas. And here are the belles of the ball—the porn stars and starlets, in all manner of neoprene saris, split-to-the-cervix gowns, do-me pumps, reptile tattoos, and black banded shirts fastened with onyx studs like the ones favored by soft-jazz saxophonists and effeminate magicians.

This odd assemblage has gathered for a four-day World Pornography Conference, August 6-9, in the Universal Sheraton, amid the strip-mall sprawl of the San Fernando Valley, porn-production capital of the world. The meeting is sponsored by the Center for Sex Research at California State University, Northridge—a sort of Left Coast Kinsey Institute.

Over 500 academics—sociologists, anthropologists, sexologists, film and gender-studies teachers, and interdisciplinary seekers from across the country—are attending under the guise of studying "Eroticism and the First Amendment." But the real aim is simpler: to celebrate pornography. As center founder and professor emeritus of history Vern Bullough says, speaking for the 12-year-old in all of us, "We hope to get more [pornography] deposits from the industry—so we'll have the biggest porn collection in the country!"

The profs are hardly alone in their enthusiasm. Despite unmerited accusations of bluenosery from more thoroughly debauched Europeans, the fact is, Americans love porn. We spend $8 billion a year on it, more than on hot dogs or country music. Last year the industry released 7,970 porno flicks—35 times the number of mainstream Hollywood features. With the '90s resurgence of Quiana-draped, '70s-era porn chic (*Boogie Nights*, Larry Flynt's deification, etc.), gone is the stigma that once forced smut enthusiasts to slink away to red-light strokehouses. Porn's pervasiveness on VHS and AOL and DVD and pay-per-view allows any midwestern pharmaceutical salesman on expense account to access *Sorority Slumber Sluts* in La Quinta Inn, queen-sized solitude.

It is small surprise, then, that the same state system of higher education that harbored Mario Savio's Free Speech Movement and brought us Angela Davis's appointment as "professor of the history of consciousness" has seen fit to confer scholarly legitimacy on this once-closeted form of entertainment. Cal State Northridge has conducted other sex conferences—in 1995, the First International Congress on Gender, Cross Dressing, and Sex Issues; in 1997, the International Conference on Prostitution—on the principle that they enhance "the university's service to the community." As media attractions, these spectacles tend to garner more coverage than discussions of the epidemiology of gonococcal infections.

But porn plenaries make for unorthodox encounters. Riding up to the opening session in a packed elevator, I watch fellow journalist Luke Ford come eyeball to areola with a porn producer's statuesque companion. "I look at your wife with the utmost respect, a coequal partner in the search for truth," Luke booms in his Aussie accent.

Luke is from Cooranbong, outside Sydney. He's a kind of shaggy-haired, acid-washed Brad Pitt, the 32-year-old son of a former Seventh Day Adventist evangelist. After a bout with atheism in his twenties, he converted to Judaism on hearing Dennis Prager, the Jewish radio theologian. Luke moved to Los Angeles and decided to write a book on either ethical living or pornography. He settled on porn, and his *A History of X* will be published next year. In the meantime, he serves as the industry's Matt Drudge, operating a porn-news Web site, where profiles of Wendy Whop-

*Matt Labash is a staff writer for* THE WEEKLY STANDARD.



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pers and Max Hardcore are garnished with Torah references and discussion of whether Jewish porners keep kosher.

Loathed in the porn industry for aggressively reporting stories such as an HIV epidemic that has seen five stars test positive since January, Luke is forced to cadge a *Sydney Morning Herald* press pass to gain admittance to the conference. I ask him why he stays on this beat, and after feeble protestations about being the only critical observer in a racket filled with industry shills, he finally shrugs: "Good question—it's something I talk about weekly with my shrink. She's an orthodox Jew."

Like everyone else here, Luke discounts claims by feminists and fundamentalists that pornography leads to violence against women. But unlike anyone else here, he seems perplexed about porn, offering eloquent disquisitions on its corrosive effect and tendency to desensitize. Once able to abstain from watching the stuff, he has developed a taste for the roughest hardcore.

**AS LUKE SEES IT, "THE BEST ARGUMENTS AGAINST PORNOGRAPHY ARE RELIGIOUS ONES: THAT SEX SHOULD BE SACRED."**

Luke breaks with the academics and porners who've adopted a chipper Rousseauian view of things: No impulse should be subjugated; porn is nothing but natural man expressing himself in the most natural of ways. He regards pornography as "inherently wild, nasty, and vicious." "The male animal is very bad news," he says, "and pornography exemplifies that. These people are divorced from the foundations of our civilization." As Luke sees it, "the best arguments against pornography are religious ones: that sex should be sacred, that the human being contains the image of God, that we should not act like animals but live in a more moral, elevated sense. I buy that," he says, "even if I don't live up to it."

Despite his inner conflict, Luke serves as my Sacajawea, guiding me through the alien biosphere that is this convocation, pointing out people I should meet. Because his name is recognized and reviled by industry regulars, Luke intermittently uses an alias, and I join in for sport. We introduce ourselves to potential sources as retired gay porn stars Dick Dundee and Jack Hammer.

My first introduction is to Ed Powers, whose soft-leather boots and head-to-toe black make him look like a Riviera pimp. The brains behind the ever-popular *Dirty Debutantes* series, Ed considers himself a true "innovator" and thinks the scholarly attention afforded by the organizers of this conference has been "a long time in coming—excuse the pun." Rare is the speaker who does not make at least one "no pun intended" or "so to speak" aside.

Luke points out Vanessa Del Rio, who once sucked milk out of a cow's udders on a magazine shoot. She's here to pick up a lifetime achievement award from the Free Speech Coalition, the conference co-sponsor and porn-industry trade association which has made a major bid for respectability. The coalition provides "talent" with health insurance, peer counseling, AIDS tests, and diagnostic information on scabies, syphilis, and venereal warts (the porner's carpal-tunnel syndrome). It also sends articulate porn stars like Juli Ashton out to lobby against sin taxes and zoning ordinances and to "educate" the world at large to see that "we're just normal, nice, moral people." (Juli has sex with a pair of circus clowns in *New Wave Hookers 4*.)

The opening ceremony will take place in a panoramic rooftop conference room. In the crowd milling around the cash bar, we run into a truly extraordinary apparition: Dr. Susan Block, who looks like Little Bo Peep on leave from a French bordello, in her layers of ruffled chiffon, peek-a-boo garters, and barely contained décolletage. Dr. Block graduated *magna cum laude* from Yale and earned her doctorate in philosophy at San Francisco State University. A sex therapist and bestselling author (*The 10 Commandments of Pleasure*), she hosts a syndicated cable talk show, where she dispenses advice on matters coital. After the show, which is broadcast from her home-studio "pleasure palace" in Beverly Hills, the guests and onlookers often dogpile in some sort of living-room bacchanal.

Like many of the academics at this conference, Block has constructed her own discipline. She calls herself an "ethical hedonist." As we talk, she pulls me and Luke and a Canadian documentary film crew into the ladies' room, along with her lovely assistant LaVonne.

Unprompted, she removes a rubber phallus from her purse and hikes up LaVonne's dress, baring her derrière. Block paddles it and kisses it while LaVonne coos. Before she can return to explaining her philosophy, Block is seized by inspiration: "Wanna hear me tinkle?" The Canadian boom-mike operator eagerly nods.

Not much of a hedonist, I rejoin the scholars, now



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taking their seats in front of the stage for the first evening's proceedings. The profs are gawking, cotton-mouthed, at the bounty of stilettoed vixens; they burrow clammy hands in snug chinos pockets like nervous ethnographers dropped into an Amazon tribe of sexpot savages.

The entertainment, dubbed "Pornocopia, Our Body of Work," doesn't disappoint. Performance artist Annie Sprinkle, porn's Yoko Ono, asks the crowd how many of them have made pornography. Nearly half the people in the room raise their hands (including Luke, who sheepishly admits that he recently completed a pseudo-documentary, *What Women Want*). Sprinkle, so named for her practice of urinating on stage, slogs through a tortuously blue monologue, which elicits belly-laughs from the hundreds of profs intent on proving they're in on the joke.

The headliner, though, is porn veteran Nina Hartley. She starred in the mainstream *Boogie Nights*, once lectured at Harvard, and is highly regarded for her script-memorizing ability and educational fare like *Woodworking 101: Nina's Guide to Better Fellatio.*

Nina dances topless and virtually bottomless while lipsynching an old Alberta Hunter tune until her glutei glisten like the haunches of a slightly dimpled Clydesdale. When she finishes, Nina barely has time to slip into her floral dress before being stormed by inquisitive academics, including a white-whiskered educational psychologist who wants to talk about developing a program where porn stars work with the handicapped.

He wishes to remain anonymous since he's affiliated with Los Angeles public schools. But I ask the good doctor what he has in mind. "I don't know, we haven't sat down and talked," he says, still glassy-eyed from Nina's performance. "This isn't the place. But I have lots of ideas, so does Nina. This whole world is new to me. I'm just exploring and seeing what I can do that's instructive. . . . There's a lot more I need to learn."

"About what?" I ask.

"About sex!" he says, exasperated.

Of course, many of us have been operating under the illusion that sex is a fairly straightforward proposition. Not so the academics. These professors have tripped upon a glorious discovery. It all started when the old canon was torched in the late '60s in favor of spot-scholarship on any given researcher's own personal interests, manias, viewing habits, and turn-ons.

This led to the proliferation of victim studies and human-sexuality courses and, more important, to the advent of pop-culture departments, whose prototype hatched at Ohio's Bowling Green University in the early '70s. As Ray Browne, architect of that department, once noted, academics found respite from neuroscience and deepest Descartes to rejuvenate themselves at these "intellectual fat farms." Some took up tenured residence there and are bingeing still on post-modernist sweetmeats: All things are worthy of study. Any nugatory pastime should be seen as a "text," to be decoded by liberal-arts gnostics. In this way are new disciplines erected ("LesBiGayTrans Film Studies"), a new lingo created ("patriarchal hegemony"). Papers are presented at conferences with titles like "Body Slam: Professional Wrestling as Greek Tragedy" and "1960s Spy Films as the Locus of Heteronormative Masculinity."

**THE PORNERS LOVE THEIR NEW ACADEMIC CACHET. THE CAL STATE TYPES HAVE TAKEN TO CALLING THEM "ADULT ENTERTAINERS."**

By now, "porn studies" is featured at several universities (the State University of New York-New Paltz, for example, and the University of California campuses at Santa Cruz, Santa Barbara, and Berkeley), though the courses may hide under headings like "community studies." Getting paid for teaching porn is "a good gig if you can get it," says porn star Sharon Mitchell, who like Nina Hartley occasionally lectures in these classes (when not pursuing her goal of a Ph.D. in child development).

The porners, of course, love their new academic cachet. Most thought they were merely escaping lives rolling gorditas on Taco Bell assembly lines when they took up rutting strangers for money in badly acted films with poor production values. Only now are they realizing that what they do is worthy of study. The Cal State types have even taken to calling porners "adult entertainers," much as they call prostitutes "sex workers." As Luke loudly proclaims in the hotel lobby, aiming to reduce the toxic levels of pretension, "These are not whores and pimps and mafiosi! These are actors, directors, producers, and technicians, and journalists, and professors. We're not just wankers!"

They're all these things, and feminists as well. Not your classic, fang-baring Andrea-Dworkin, Catherine-MacKinnon, all-sex-is-rape feminist theoreticians



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incensed by pornography and harassment, but "sex-positive feminists," as Nina calls them. This is no less than a sea change. In the past, feminist politics—not conventional morality—has stood as the chief impediment to the open acceptance of pornography on campus: Pornography, preached the old feminists, objectifies women within oppressive power hierarchies.

But over the last decade, a spate of Nina Hartley types have given voice to the noble savage. Hartley is a brainy red-diaper baby and socialist who contributes essays like "Frustrations of a Feminist Porn Star" to turgid anthologies, tossing off references to Newtonian and Einsteinian physics and correctly deploying words like "etiology." She talks about promoting "worker control of the means of production" to reclaim porn as the embodiment of female empowerment and sexual expression as originally envisioned by our foremothers during the sexual revolution.

Though MacKinnon and Dworkin—or "MacDworkin" as the sex-positivists pejoratively call them—would have us believe that the women of the porn industry are victims of patriarchal hegemony, Hartley and company claim to do what they do for profit and pleasure. This is an egalitarian argument—and it can truly be said that porn women are just as autonomous, as morally bereft, and as capable of making bad decisions as porn men.

There's a certain seductive bonhomie among the positivists, as I learn traveling with Hartley and Sharon Mitchell to a $65-a-head porn-industry benefit to combat racism (an event not linked to the conference). I am riding in Nina's stretch limo, drinking Nina's bourbon, listening to Nina prattle on about the need for increased interaction between porners and profs and how, were she not so exhibitionistic, she'd like nothing better than "to retreat happily to the study of sex and books in a life of contemplation." Nina says all this while receiving a foot-rub from Sharon, whose gazelle legs gape apart as she sits in the low-slung seat across from me. Sharon is wearing gold shoulder glitter and a stitch of a dress with nothing under it.

It is hard to imagine riding in a limo drinking bourbon with an underclad MacDworkin. Harder still to imagine wanting to—and probably unnecessary, since MacDworkinism is increasingly marginalized by sane people everywhere. Even on campuses, the porn-positive feminists sunny-up the business enough to lend it cover and discourage scrutiny of its bothersome aspects (AIDS, rampant drug use and suicide, miscellaneous violence—Sharon Mitchell was nearly killed by a fan who broke her larynx while biting her all over her body). Once the sex-positivists

AP/World Wide Photos

*Nina Hartley, red-diaper porn star*

gain the advantage, political unanimity prevails—everybody at the conference is a staunch libertarian—and the only remaining issue is esthetic. No one here would dream of asking the question, What do we become by watching porn? Instead, the question is, What kind of porn should we watch?

Sociology professor James Elias, the conference host and director of the Cal State Northridge sex-research center, says he tried to find someone to represent a countervailing view but was unsuccessful. MacDworkinites typically will not debate the merits of pornography. As for porn critics whose objection is religious, Elias says that "to take an evangelical person [and] put them up against one of the top defense attorneys in the country to debate—it would be an embarrassment for everyone."

He's referring to the American Civil Liberties Union's Nadine Strossen, who has come to the conference to defend the proposition, as the ACLU has for years, that engaging in all modes of depravity is a cherished and absolute American right. She told a



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roomful of porners "how essential" are their efforts to overcome "our puritanical heritage" and applauded their "vital contribution to First Amendment freedoms," adding, "Keep it up! So to speak!" One would think, listening to Strossen and her ilk, that Anthony Comstock were still screening our mail. The truth, as reported by the *Adult Video News*, is that there has been no better time in American history to be a pornographer. Obscenity prosecutions have slowed to near-extinction under the Clinton administration, and adult-industry output has doubled in the last five years. While autograph seekers congregate around Strossen, Al Goldstein, the corpulent vulgarian who is the editor of *Screw* magazine, stands next to her signing programs.

"Oy vey," says Luke. "Proverbs says the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. This conference will show you how incredibly stupid people get when they don't have a fear of God."

He's speaking of the professors, who slither through the halls ogling passing porn actresses and purchasing wares like the "Fleshlight—Man's New Best Friend," a lifelike molded-gel insert made from "Real Feel Super Skin (TM)" and used for—well, for educational purposes. Also available is an array of catalogs from which to order classroom materials. Porn is now so mainstream that there are even blooper videos: Watch "P.J. break up her co-stars by passing a little gas."

**WHEN ONE VIEWS ONE'S PERVERSIONS WITH SCHOLARLY DETACHMENT, IT SEEMS ALL THINGS BECOME PERMISSIBLE.**

When one views one's perversions with scholarly detachment, it seems, all things become permissible. The only genre denounced at the conference is child pornography—except at the child-pornography panel. There, Harris Mirkin, a political scientist from the University of Missouri, Kansas City, asserts there is no real evidence that children are harmed by being photographed naked.

Meanwhile, David Sonenschein, formerly of the Kinsey Institute, illustrates the supposed ludicrousness of child-pornography restrictions by showing us a photograph once forced out of an exhibition. In the picture, a cherubic, naked two-year-old grabs and explores the penis of the photographer, who is reclining naked on a bed.

I ask Vern Bullough, the center's founder, whether he is bothered by such a display, especially since the photographer wasn't the child's father. "I think it's one of those gray areas," Bullough says, adding that it is "very educational. . . . We ought to [let children] explore. When I had children, they explored me in the shower."

I ask Bullough whether anyone else's children explored him in the shower. "I don't think that's an appropriate question," interjects the conference's eavesdropping legal counsel. "People's relations have never been an issue at this conference. It is all based on the material we presented in a professional and scholarly manner."

Except, it turns out, at the "Night of the Stars," the Free Speech Coalition's awards dinner, which serves as something of a porn-star prom night and is held during the conference at the same hotel. Luke can't attend, as he has to keep the Sabbath holy. Needing a new guide, I turn to Jena, an attractive 25-year-old just off the bus from Orlando. She entered the business three weeks ago and has already starred in seven films—*Fresh Flesh* and six others she can't quite remember. Jena is fairly finicky by porn-actress standards: There are varieties of sex she won't engage in on screen, including interracial—that is, until Mr. Marcus saunters up behind her.

Mr. Marcus, who looks like a tightly coiled anaconda with elephantiasis of the deltoids, is fresh from starring in the *World's Luckiest Black Man*, so titled because Mr. Marcus couples with 101 co-stars. He says the shoot took one day, though industry sources snit that it actually took three. Still, that's 33.6 women a day, and nobody's questioning his work ethic.

Though Jena has promised to take me to an afterparty at a place called the Rubber Room, she disappears with Mr. Marcus. Ten minutes later, I find her in a meeting room where stragglers are eagerly congregating. She is on her knees pleasuring Mr. Marcus for the benefit of 20 or so onlookers. In the same room over the next hour, various awards-night attendees and industry shutterbugs view other impromptu live-sex shows.

Two starlets lie on a table, engaging in sexual activity as matter-of-factly as if they were exchanging business cards. Another barely coherent platinum-haired actress in a silver-sequined cocktail dress spreads her hands against the wall to gain her balance. All hard bones and hollow eye-sockets, her head involuntarily bobbing side to side like a spring-



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necked dashboard ornament, she lowers herself onto an empty Bud Light bottle. She is met with cheers from her carny-barker escort and from the sweaty spectators who have pressed around her like punters at a Balinese cockfight. As she sits sprawled on the floor, emitting alcohol-induced giggles, souvenir-seekers take turns cozying up behind her to have their pictures taken.

Jena tells me such exhibitions are good for business. Only later do I learn that she has a husband who knows nothing of her extracurricular networking (her six-year-old daughter doesn't even know of her "acting" career). She begs me not to write about it, until I remind her that she fellated Mr. Marcus in front of a roomful of photographers. "All right," she relents, "go ahead."

Most of the panels, however, present no vexing dilemmas: Porn is good. Pants-suited porn starlets wax self-analytic at a session headlined "Victims or Visionaries?" Verdict: Visionaries! Against this consensus, panels explore the particulars of porn's artistic merits and cultural significance, harvesting insights so minute as to be barely detectable. At the "Role of Fetishism" panel, philosophy professor David Austin of North Carolina State University has determined through rigorous Internet study that the number of "necro[philia] enthusiasts is about three times that of [menstrual] period enthusiasts." The next speaker, Midori, a "FetishDiva" squeezed into a black rubber Emma Peel catsuit with six-inch stiletto boots, shows us slides of 19th-century Austrian pumps that "render the wearer immobile and thrust the foot forward like an offering."

**ACADEMICS, APPARENTLY, ARE THE ONLY PEOPLE WHO CAN DE-EROTICIZE SEX MORE COMPLETELY THAN PORNOGRAPHERS.**

Over in "Cum Shots: History, Theory, and Research," Dr. Peter Sandor Gardos, a San Francisco clinical sexologist, explains his research on the ejaculatory "money shot," the genre's most sacred convention. Gardos recruits college sophomores to view porn-movie clips of actors ejaculating on their female counterparts, then gauges whether they find the images degrading. His data have led him to conclude that "no pornographic image is interpretable outside of its historical and social context. Harm or degradation does not reside in the image itself." Bill Margold, who has starred in over 400 films, begs to differ, asserting that such shots represent "vicarious revenge exacted upon the cheerleader by X-number of men who could not get that cheerleader."

Another panel deconstructs Ed Powers's *Dirty Debutantes* oeuvre. Peter Lehman, a University of Arizona professor and Blake Edwards scholar, reads from a laborious treatise laced with allusions to Godard, Lumière, and Méliès. Powers's contribution: He displaces "the monotonous emphasis on the meat shot" and constructs instead "a comic Woody Allen-like Jewish persona for himself, acknowledging insecurities such as worrying about his penis size." Lehman concedes to me that he and his colleagues "are legitimizing [porners] within the culture," but only in a way "that I think they deserve."

Academics, it seems, are the only people who can de-eroticize sex more completely than pornographers. The most striking instance comes when U of Cal Irvine's Jay Lorenz delivers his presentation on the "gonzo" films of John Stagliano, a.k.a. Buttman, one of porn's top directors, a Cato Institute benefactor, and an unapologetic gluteus enthusiast.

Citing Stagliano's voyeuristic *vérité* travelogues, which begin as interviews and culminate in sex in public places, a straight-faced Lorenz launches a lengthy exegesis comparing Stagliano's persona to the late-19th-century *flâneur* as described by Baudelaire. He illustrates with clips of *Buttman in Barcelona.* Lorenz's purpose? To expatiate on the "binary collapse" and "epistemological flippage" brought about by "the erosion of the once-secure border distinction between the private and public spheres."

Himself a panelist, Stagliano looks slightly embarrassed by the attention. "All I wanted to do was make videos that really turned me on," he mumbles, his shirt unbuttoned to mid-sternum. "Another idea I had was to make a video about, uh, my obsession, uh, with female butts."

Nobody laughs. But if anyone entertains lingering doubts about what fuels Stagliano's artistic vision, he need only walk to the back of the room, past the beard-tugging academics, past the beaded water pitchers, to the table that contains an advertisement for Stagliano's *Buttman* magazine. There, beneath a letter from the editor entitled "From the Crack," is a picture of Stagliano: Auteur, Libertarian Champion, Toast of the Academy, Harbinger of Tomorrow's Canon. At least it looks like Stagliano. It's difficult to tell. His face is buried in some girl's fleshy keister. ♦



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# There's No Way Like the Third Way

**By Irwin M. Stelzer**

There is a new "Big Idea" abroad in the land—no, in the world. "The United States and President Clinton's administration are at the forefront of an important transformation taking hold in the wealthy democracies of Europe and North America," writes E.J. Dionne in the *Washington Post*. Why, this new idea is so big that no less an expert on political philosophy than Sidney Blumenthal joined with first victim Hillary Rodham Clinton to convene a group of sympathizers at the White House to discuss it. The idea? The Third Way, described by Dionne as an effort to "replace the traditional liberal and social democratic doctrines of the left and the free-market ideas of the right . . . , to accommodate and reform the free market at the same time."

Next week the Third Way will wind its way to New York. Political leaders who profess to have found the road that runs between capitalism and socialism will gather at New York University to trade ideas and plans that they are convinced will produce a better world and, not incidentally, ensure their continuation in power.

Barring resignation, our president will be there, asserting that compassion is a key ingredient in this allegedly new political confection. British prime minister Tony Blair, perhaps the most serious and coherent proponent of the Third Way, will be there too. And so will Italian prime minister Romano Prodi, fresh from his success in fudging his nation's budget sufficiently to make Italy eligible for inclusion among the 11 European nations who will soon abandon their national currencies in favor of the Euro. Finally, Brazil's Fernando Henrique Cardoso is scheduled to attend, to represent Latin American countries that are struggling to maintain democratic institutions and reform their economies, while narrowing the wide gap that separates rich from poor in that part of the world.

Only Germany's Gerhard Schröder will be absent, his attention drawn to the more practical problem of unseating Chancellor Helmut Kohl in upcoming elections. Schröder, who prefers the phrase "new middle" to the Third Way, is nevertheless a full-fledged, dues-paying member of the Clinton-Blair-Prodi-Cardoso club. He has hired Clinton adviser Hank Sheinkopf to do research on the opposition and goes to great lengths to liken himself to Blair—the youthful can-do enthusiast available to replace a distinguished but aging leader who is out of touch with the people. He will be missed at the NYU gathering.

But not sufficiently to dampen the triumphalist rhetoric of the leaders who will attend. And they have reason for satisfaction. As Tony Blair has pointed out, "The center-left is in office, not only in Britain, but throughout Europe, in a dozen EU countries." And, he might have added, it controls the executive branch of the U.S. government, Bill Clinton having made it clear in his last State of the Union message that his way is, indeed, the Third Way. More important, contends Blair, "It is the center-left which holds the intellectual advantage; it is our agenda which will reshape people's lives."

To understand the Third Way, start with the proposition that the traditional "ways," left and right, no longer lead to a better life. David Miliband, who heads Blair's Policy Unit, is clear on this point: "Important issues seem ill-served by the traditional definitions of Left and Right." The certainties of the Right "strain the credulity even of true believers. . . . Schumpeter, Keynes and Polanyi all argued fifty years ago that unfettered market rule will corrode precisely the values and institutions on which the social order rests." As for the Left, "the model of directive control that characterized not just communism, but also various forms of top-down Fabianism, have little purchase today. . . . The traditional definitions of Left and Right—set by counterpositions of market and state, individual and collective, public and private sphere—are superseded." Conclusion: "Beyond doubt . . . we need a new model of political change."

It is, of course, easier to consign both Left and Right to the dustbin of history than to devise a Third Way. Advancing from slogan to concept is particularly difficult here in America, where Third Wayer-in-Chief

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Bill Clinton is known for using precise language only under legal duress. After all, Clinton has found this new route broad enough to encompass his 1996 announcement that the era of big government has ended and his 1998 call for an expansion of government to include subsidization of child care, extension of government-funded health care from the elderly to the merely middle-aged, and the use of federal funds for the until-now local functions of hiring teachers and building schools. The Third Way, at least in Clinton's hands, is a many-splendored thing, or at minimum an extremely elastic one. "We have moved past the sterile debate between those who say government is the enemy and those who say government is the answer," the president told the nation in the State of the Union this year. "My fellow Americans, we have found a third way."

He's not the first to find it. Third Way adherents' claim to novelty reflects either ignorance of the fact that their search for a path different both from capitalism and from state socialism is merely the latest in many such attempts, or a cynical attempt to put a new label on a product that, to put it mildly, has not met with much success.

**IT IS, OF COURSE, EASIER TO CONSIGN BOTH LEFT AND RIGHT TO THE DUSTBIN OF HISTORY THAN TO DEVISE AN ALTERNATIVE.**

It was fashionable after World War II for liberal academics to hail Sweden's "Middle Way" as the answer to their prayers. Opposed to American capitalism for its failure to accord them the rewards they felt were their due, and dimly aware that Stalin's communism contained unattractive features, they fastened on Sweden's expansive and expanding welfare state as the *via media*. Alas, Sweden is bankrupt, or close to it, having found it impossible to maintain incentives to work in the face of government provision of the necessities and many of the luxuries of life.

Then there was France—cultured, sophisticated, producer of the movies that American intellectuals stormed the art houses to see. France provided a different flavor of the Third Way—indicative planning. As an alternative to raucous, unplanned markets, the French elite—business executives, trade-union leaders and government bureaucrats—imposed on the country their view of what should be produced, in what quantities, and directed investment so as to confer on their nation technological leadership. Alas, planning by a central elite has neither brought France technological leadership, nor made it sufficiently competitive to give up its protectionism for the hurly-burly of international competition. France's unemployment rate hovers at three times the American level, and enormous transfers of income from those who work to the unemployed have proved insufficient to prevent the latter from rioting for a year-end bonus. The trade unions periodically shut the country down, and the voice of disaffected anti-immigrant, anti-Semitic, anti-everything crazies is heard in the land. So much for the notion that, unlike capitalism, France's Third Way can be counted on to produce social harmony.

The next Third Way to make its appearance was Germany's—an effort to find a path between capitalism and socialism that appealed to both corpocrats and trade-union bosses. German workers are included on corporate boards and participate in decisions concerning plant location, work rules, and the other stuff of industrial life. Corporate executives are shielded from the need to deliver wealth to shareholders by the fact that understanding and very conservative banks control their boards. Hostile takeovers are unthinkable (a feature particularly attractive to under-performing American executives). Top all of this off with a welfare state that rewards absence from work at the same rate as work, provides state-paid vacations to spas, limits shop hours, and makes firing so difficult as to deter hiring, and you have a Third Way that gives something to everyone—the poor consumer, of course, excepted. Alas, this German variant of the Third Way, like those of Sweden and France, has proved unable to cope with its predictable consequences: the highest worker absentee rate in Europe, labor costs some 50 percent higher than those in the United States, a sclerotic engineering industry whose largest export now seems to be investment and jobs, and a welfare system that an aging population simply can no longer pay for.

Never mind. Herr Schröder has still another Third Way on offer. Not for him the market capitalism of America. Indeed, not for him any major reform of the welfare state: He has promised to restore to 100 percent the sick pay that Helmut Kohl reluctantly reduced to 80 percent of ordinary wages. Like Blair and Clinton, Schröder professes to understand that the age of big government is over—"The welfare state has reached its limits," is the way he puts it. But unlike Clinton, who finally grasped the nettle of welfare reform, even if reluctantly, and Blair, who seems about to do so, Schröder proposes to continue funding a sys-



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tem that has produced persistent double-digit unemployment and a flight of Mercedes-making to America. He will, he says, get the necessary funds by closing tax loopholes—at least that is his position while running for office.

Then, of course, there is Japan's Third Way, a combination of state direction of corporate activity, mercantilism, and crony capitalism. This alternative to Thatcher-Reagan free markets seemed for a while likely to propel Japan to the first rank of industrial nations. No one noticed that Japanese protectionism was impoverishing its consumers, that silly planning had driven the price of land up to the point where a rice paddy near Tokyo was as expensive as a great swath of midtown Manhattan, or that a combination of government pressure and cronyism had forced the banks to make loans that have since proved wildly imprudent. Result: Japan's Third Way led only to prolonged recession.

Kevin Chadwick

So the hunt for the Third Way is hardly new. It has long been the goal of those who simply cannot accept the fact that free-market capitalism is the only system that has brought material benefits to all—unequally, but to all who chose to participate in its labor markets.

The faces, though, have changed. It's a new generation of Third Way leaders meeting at NYU, and they have personal as well as political traits in common. Blair, Clinton, and Schröder all tout their youthfulness and vigor. Blair ran against the image of a tired Tory government that had been in power too long and was run by men who had stayed too long at the ball. Clinton ran as a sort of New Age opposite of stuck-in-the-mud and out-of-touch George Bush (and then proceeded to make stuck-in-the-mud, old-fashioned, some would say Victorian values, a virtue not to be lightly dismissed). Schröder acknowledges Kohl's contributions to the unification of his country and to the shaping of postwar Europe, but argues that new problems require new leaders in the mold of Blair and Clinton. All three have mastered the use of television; all three have forgone the outward trappings of office. Blair tells everyone to "call me Tony"; Clinton uses a television appearance to discuss the type of underwear he favors; Schröder eschews the security retinues that surround modern-day politicians. All in pursuit of having, or at least seeming to have, a common touch, unlike, say, the regal Thatcher or the remote Bush.

With so much in common, the Third Way politicians should make a congenial group. But if they want to have more than a self-congratulatory good time—and Blair, at least, is in serious pursuit of a coherent path between "the free market individualism of the Right in the Eighties . . . [and] the statism that had gone before"—they will have to give serious thought to some of the new learning about the efficacy, or lack of it, of state action and confront the charge that there is a contradiction at the heart of their enterprise.

The Third Way often defines itself by what it opposes, making it difficult to discover what it favors. As best one can tell, it seeks to preserve the benefits of market capitalism—Blair speaks highly of many of the reforms introduced by Thatcher—while at the same time replacing or at least supplementing Adam



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Smith's invisible hand with the long arm of government.

Now, there is some merit to some of this. After all, conservatives concede that there are certain goods that only government can provide, and that it needs the resources to do so. But Third Way advocates have yet to come to grips with powerful arguments that many of the functions once thought reserved to government—from education to trash collection to road building—can better be provided by the private sector. Or with new studies that suggest churches and other private, voluntary institutions are more efficient and successful providers of various social services than are governments, and that the latter can do the most good for the truly needy and deserving by devolving many of its welfare functions to these voluntary institutions.

Surely, this is a topic worthy of their consideration when they convene at NYU. As is the even more important question of whether their Third Way, rather than the capitalist system they can't quite bring themselves to accept, suffers from a debilitating inherent contradiction.

The inherent contradiction is this: Fairness, to a Third Way disciple, requires that the excluded be included in the mainstream of the economy and of society. This entails expanded job-training programs, increased spending on education, especially for those from "disadvantaged" environments, increasing expenditures on health care, hiring more teachers and a host of other measures that have proved to be costly but, unfortunately, of uncertain value. To pay for these measures, Third Way politicians will inevitably have to raise taxes. Eventually these tax increases will stifle growth, drive jobs offshore, and otherwise deny Third Way politicians the means to create the fairer society that is their stated goal.

So far, neither Blair nor Clinton nor any of the politicians who will join them at NYU has faced up to this criticism. And with reason. As a practical matter, their political opponents have not forced them to do so. In America, notably, Republicans have either gone along with Clinton's expansion of the welfare state, and refused to attempt to cut taxes so as to force its shrinkage, or felt that his political weakness permitted them to ignore his proposals without actually responding to them.

Not being pressed for coherence, Third Way politicians can be expected to rely on platitudes and on a parading of their good intentions and compassion. Fortunately, a combination of circumstances makes the Third Way they espouse less dangerous to the future well-being of their citizens than might otherwise be the case. Margaret Thatcher has said that "the Third Way leads only to the Third World," and she may well prove right in the case of some European countries. But not in the case of America, which is peculiarly well situated to resist and survive Third Way nostrums. This country's electorate has blessed it with divided government, and a Republican Congress is unlikely to let a Democratic president take an unimpeded stroll down the Third Way. Besides, the American economy is an enormous machine, run by millions of consumers and entrepreneurs, flexible and resilient. Adam Smith long ago noted, "There is a great deal of ruin in a nation," an observation especially applicable to the United States. Third Way policies may drive up business costs and taxes enough to shave a bit off the long-term growth of the American economy. But that's about all.

The unlikelihood that the Third Way can do much harm is not its only defense. When all is said and done, there is a possibility that its proponents may be onto something, although not necessarily the something they think they are onto. Start with Britain. It remains a class-ridden society, one in which equal opportunity is not even an ideal for many of those who oppose Blair. It is a society in which rewards are not distributed in even rough proportion to effort and achievement, although Margaret Thatcher did much to improve the upward mobility of those disadvantageously accented.

Neither is America exactly a meritocracy. True, the Left has distorted income distribution with quotas and special privileges for any group that can muster enough votes to be heard. But the Right is hardly in a position to dismiss the Third Way as an interference with a perfectly functioning allocation of rewards in proportion to merit. Republicans propose to lower inheritance taxes, to give the sons and daughters of the wealthy an even bigger head start in life; they are unoffended by universities that grant preferential admission to the offspring of alumni; and they systematically refuse to recognize that when markets fail to function—as is the case in the presence of monopoly power or environmental degradation—government has a corrective role to play.

That the NYU talking shop will produce some new solution to these problems, some programs that will increase the efficiency with which capitalism distributes the material rewards it is so good at creating, is unlikely. But before conservatives take too much delight in the failure of the Third Way, they might well acknowledge that their own way is not without its share of contradictions and quandaries. ♦



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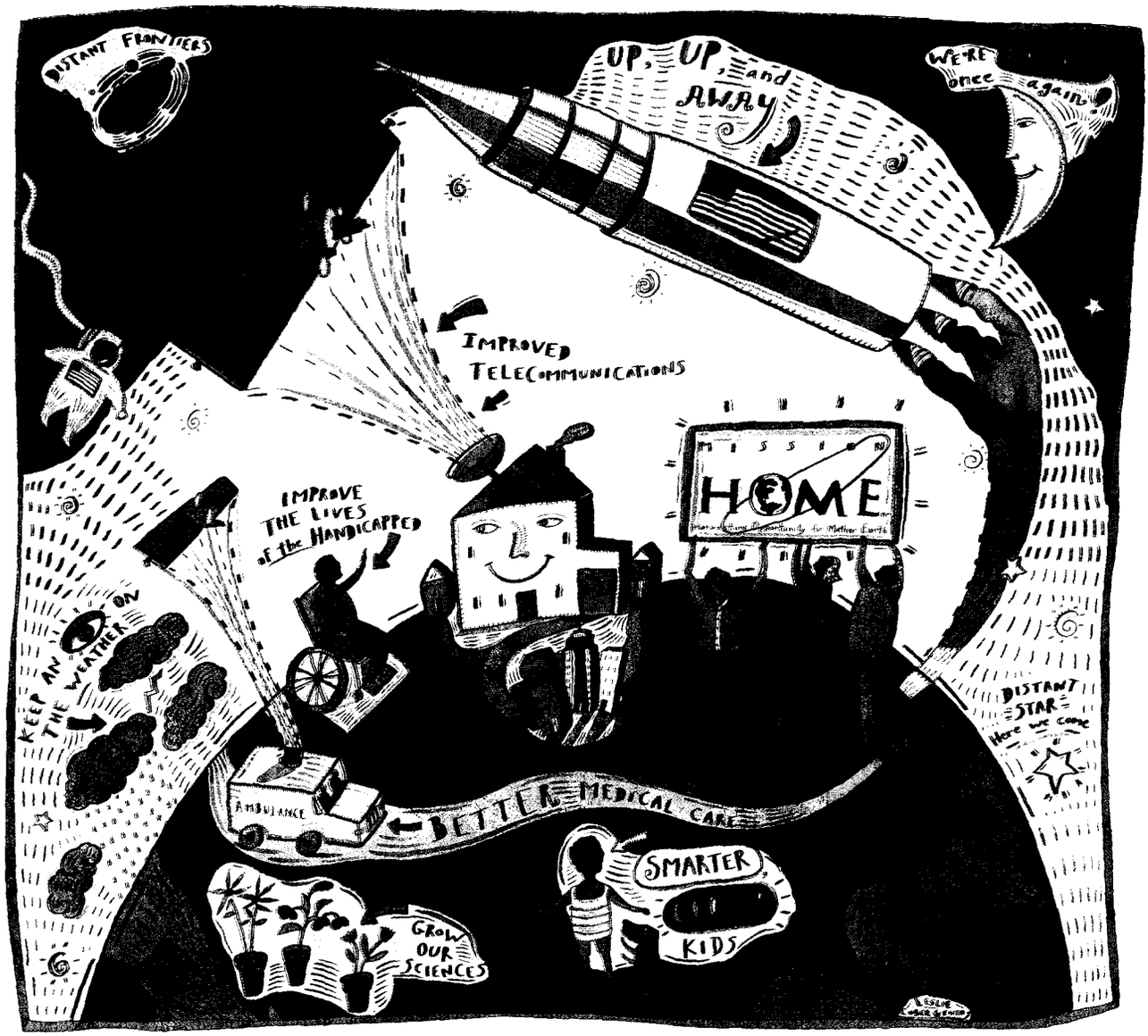


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# LUCKY HIM

## *The Life and Language of Kingsley Amis*

**By Andrew Ferguson**

Good thing the British novelist Kingsley Amis is dead, because I want to write about his *sensibility*—just the kind of lit-crit buzzword that would have caused him to hurl this article across the room and denounce its writer as a F—ING FOOL (his favorite epithet, always capitalized but without the dash). Which gives you some idea of his sensibility right there.

That sensibility was of a complicated kind not often found these days. Three years after his death in 1995, at age seventy-three, Amis is probably best known to readers under forty as the father of Martin Amis, a novelist-celebrity who possesses all the currently approved sensitivities about class and race and war and capitalism, as well as the lust for experimentation that his father disdained.

Kingsley's views were more interesting, more likely to surprise. He was a populist and a Tory, an arch-traditionalist who despised snobbery in every form, a story-teller consumed in the mysteries of sex who nevertheless denied his characters any hint of emotional exhibitionism. He was also a world-class boozer and skirt-chaser who produced, over the course of a forty-year career, an enormous body of work with a range rivaled by few of his contemporaries: two volumes of short stories and three of poetry, four books of literary essays, a book-length study of Rudyard Kipling and another of Ian Fleming, a hilarious and gossipy memoir, and—the crux of his achievement—more than twenty novels, including a ghost story, a futuristic fantasy, two science-fiction novels, two murder mysteries, and a welter of social comedies beginning with the great *Lucky Jim* in 1953.

And now, posthumously, we have two more Amis books, one by him, the other about him: Eric Jacobs's *Kingsley Amis: A Biography* and his own *The King's English: A Guide to Modern Usage*. Both show why the artist and his sensibility are still worth thinking about, though it's not always pleasant to do so.

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Amis was born in South London—the wrong side of the river—to a doting mother and a demanding father who worked as a company clerk. He was an only child and a mama's boy, and he carried with him throughout his life the crotchets of the type. Terrified of the dark, he made girlfriends walk him home after dates. He refused to stay alone in a house overnight. He flew only once, as a young man, and ever after declined to get on an airplane. He disliked enclosed spaces of any sort. Other than preparing a cup of tea and opening a bottle of whiskey, he found the simplest domestic tasks unfathomable, a failing that led him, in the last decade of his life, to set up house with his ex-wife, who cooked his meals and did his laundry, and her husband, who made his bed and cleaned his room. And he was a lifelong victim of that most incurable disease, hypochondria.

Amis reacted to his "underpopulated" childhood in other ways, too: He craved social life, especially any that involved the consumption of alcohol, and he had a large appetite for hard work. Both needs were satisfied at Oxford, where he won a full scholarship in English literature. A young man from the lower middle class might have been expected to feel left out among the university's rigid class system, but the Second World War was on, and the traditional distinctions of wealth and title made little difference at a time when no one could spend any money since there was nothing to buy.

Oxford never seemed so meritocratic as it did during the war. Amis studied with C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, and Lord David Cecil, and began his greatest friendship, with the poet Philip Larkin. Just as important,

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he developed and refined his ardor for the three great passions of his life: drink, women, and literature. (Jacobs places them in this order of importance, and he may be right.) Over the next forty years, there were subsidiary concerns, of course—Amis loved music, having a special taste for Mozart and 1930s jazz, and he wrote provocatively about politics, and with his first wife he had three children whom he seemed to like well enough. But his personal and professional lives are best understood amid this triangle of preoccupations.

The most revealing part of Eric Jacobs's biography comes at the beginning, in a chapter that takes the reader through a typical day-in-the-life during Amis's last years. "Kingsley Amis sits at a table upon which rests a glass of whisky," reads the first sentence, describing the writer at lunchtime, and it's bottoms-up from there. Amis was famous for his attachment to the drinking life, and he wrote about it, as he wrote about most things, very well. Probably the most famous passage in all of Amis's work is the hangover description from *Lucky Jim*:

> He lay sprawled, too wicked to move, spewed up like a broken spider-crab on the tarry shingle of the morning. The light did him harm, but not as much as looking at things did; he resolved, having done it once, never to move his eyeballs again. A dusty thudding in his head made the scene before him beat like a pulse. His mouth had been used as a latrine by some small creature of the night, and then as its mausoleum.

Well, this is the downside to drinking, of course, but there's another side, too, which Amis preferred to dwell upon. His three books on the subject are very funny and quite serious in their practicality: drink recipes, hangover cures, tips on choosing bar tools. They are characterized by Amis's absolute refusal to apologize for his devotion to the bottle. Nowadays we would call this attitude politically incorrect, except that nowadays, too, being politically incorrect is as fashionable as being politically correct. But Amis blazed the trail. It's hard to imagine any other literary celebrity of the present age writing such defiant passages as this, from *On Drink*: "Leaving aside dipsomaniacs, most or many of whom are born, not made, I feel that there is very little we can safely add, in discussing our motives for drinking, to the poet who said we do it because 'we are dry, or lest we may be by and by, or any other reason why.'"

Amis insisted that drink never took a toll on his work, and Jacobs, the most sympathetic biographer imaginable, agrees. Amis wrote for several hours every day and never drank while he wrote. But the drinking had its costs. In his fifties he went to fat and kept getting fatter, until he had to have his clothes specially made; by the end of his life he was gouty and bloated and incapable of walking more than a few yards at a time. And his already rickety second marriage, to the novelist Jane Howard, finally collapsed when he refused to stop drinking—no loss to him, since by then he had become impotent, this too a consequence of all that malt whiskey (and vodka, gin, claret, brandy . . . ).

**Kingsley Amis**
***The King's English***
***A Guide to Modern Usage***
Dunne, 288 pp., $23.95

**Eric Jacobs**
***Kingsley Amis***
***A Biography***
St. Martin's, 392 pp., $26.95

The impotence must have been harder to deal with, for Amis had been a womanizer of heroic scale. He married at Oxford and moved with his young family to Wales, where he got a job as lecturer in a provincial university and began his career as a novelist. Before too long, he was famous. The near-universal success of *Lucky Jim* brought him often to London and offered an endless series of trysts, but he pursued his philandering closer to home, too, with students, faculty wives, and anyone else who had the misfortune to wear a skirt and cross his path. Not surprisingly his first marriage crumbled under the weight of his misbehavior, and also not surprisingly Amis had adulterous husbands figure prominently in almost all his novels, with varying degrees of sympathy.

Like most men who obsessively pursue women, Amis didn't much like them. Here too, however, his biographer is eager to put the best face on things, with unintentionally comic effect. "Amis's variety of misogyny was partial and qualified," Jacobs writes, really he does. "He was sympathetic to women as a class, believing they got the raw end of most deals in life, as wives or mothers or in work." However heartfelt his respect for women as a class, his distaste for them in the particular rendered Amis, as a novelist, incapable of creating full-blooded female characters. Amis's women are either sweet and cute and rather perceptive in a childlike way, or they are shrieking bitches from whom men understandably flee into the arms of the sweet and cute ones.

This inability to represent half the species with any kind of variety or surprise is, as you might think, a serious artistic defect. But the novels have their strengths, too. Unable to create believable women, Amis often resolved the conflicts of his stories in a kind of romantic haze: naughty boy meets good girl, boy loses girl, boy gets tangled up with shrieking bitch, and boy eventually wins back good girl. In more than one Amis novel, True Love wins out in the end, which may not be realistic but can at least be refreshing and satisfying. And though he didn't understand women, Amis did understand men, especially that large percentage of men who don't understand women; he was by no means sympathetic to all of these fellows either. A dozen or more of his novels deserve to last, because they are funny and entertaining and beautifully, if idiosyncratically, written. What-



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ever their failings in matters of the heart, as works of social observation they are quite often accurate about things that contemporary novelists are seldom accurate about. It was a matter of sensibility.

Amis was early on tagged by literary journalists as one of Britain's Angry Young Men of the 1950s. Most of these were leftists, and indeed Amis had been a Communist at Oxford and stayed a left-winger for the next fifteen years or more. But even as a leftist he was unorthodox. In a pamphlet he wrote for the Fabian Society in 1957, he duly expressed the approved sentiments of the literary man—for nationalization and socialism, against the royal family and private schools—before letting slip a few misgivings: "I share a widespread suspicion of the professional espouser of causes, the do-gooder, the archetypal social worker who knows better than I do what is good for me. . . . The only edge the Tories have over the socialists from my point of view is that they at least are not out to do anybody any good except themselves." Here were the makings of the Thatcherite Tory he eventually became. By the 1960s, he had rejected the Left absolutely. He was strongly pro-American and anti-Communist, and vocally supported American involvement in the Vietnam war—the equivalent, in the literary circles of the day, of coming out for cannibalism.

In fact, though, Amis was not much interested in politics as politics. He expressed himself on this subject only as a means of annoying the literary establishment. He was drawn to the Tory party because he came to see it as the "party of non-politics, of resistance to politics." Above all, he detested the politicization of literature, which he believed to be largely a project of liberals and leftists. This was the explicit thesis of the best of Amis's later novels, *The Russian Girl*, published in 1992. In it a professor of Russian literature, British of course, helps a young (and pretty of course) Russian poet named Anna circulate a petition entreating the Russian government to release a political prisoner. The two seek out Andrei Kotolynov, a world-famous novelist exiled by the Soviet regime during the Cold War, now living in the English countryside. The great man refuses to sign the Russian girl's petition.

Summit Books

*Amis in the 1950s: Anthony Powell to his left, Philip Larkin and Hilly Amis to his right.*

"Anna's position, her status, her simply being a writer are being used for politics," Kotolynov says.

> This I will not countenance. Everywhere in the world literature is in retreat from politics and unless resisted the one will crush the other. You don't crush literature from outside by killing writers or intimidating them or not letting them publish, though as we've all seen you can make a big fuss and have a lot of fun trying. You do better to induce them to destroy it themselves by inducing them to subordinate it to political purposes, as you propose to do.

Kotolynov sums up the corrupt contemporary attitude toward fiction:

> If there has to be a novel, please nothing about the life and death of individuals, or growing up and falling in love and getting married and being bereaved, or loss and grief and pain and remorse and courage and any of that old embarrassing stuff. No fiction, no art, just statements . . . about guess what? That's right—politics. Hiroshima and Watergate and Vietnam and Wounded Knee, not forgetting Cambodia, and fascism and racism and male chauvinism and homosexuality, not just one or two or three of them at a time but all of them at once, and Hollywood and consumerism and whatever they call it now.

The Russian novelist goes on to say that he has given up writing novels altogether, since as a famous exile every word he writes will be interpreted politically. In a lovely Amis touch, however, this turns out to be untrue: We soon learn that the world-famous Andrei Kotolynov continues to write—murder mysteries, under the pen name Andrew Cottle.

Among other things, this is an inside joke on Amis's own lack of literary snobbery. The lack was often taken as philistinism by his many critical enemies. But Amis was no philistine: his likes and dislikes were passionately held and reinforced by a vast erudition. They were also uncontaminated by the consensus of professors of Eng. Lit. He preferred A. E. Housman to T. S. Eliot, for example, and Kipling to the later Joyce. As Jacobs notes, he thought obscurantism in literature was a form of snobbery—a way of fencing off the pleasures of poetry and narrative from ordinary readers. It was no accident, he believed, that the decline of British fiction, which he dated to the 1890s, coincided with the rise of literature as



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St. Martin's Press

*Amis with his children in 1960: Sally, Martin, and Philip.*

a subject of academic study.

Amis enjoyed his several excursions into genre fiction—detective novels and science fiction—but unlike, say, Graham Greene, who wrote potboilers of his own, Amis never divided his "entertainments" from his "real novels." He wanted them *all* to be entertainments. As a sometime reviewer, he went out of his way to praise the craftsmanship of novelists, like Ian Fleming and Dick Francis, who were routinely scorned by academic critics. Genre writers, Amis believed, were at least fulfilling what he took to be the novelist's primary duty: the telling of engaging stories. At the same time, he wanted his books to be about "the life and death of individuals . . . pain and remorse and courage and all that embarrassing stuff." He just didn't think that the conventions of plot and character had to be sacrificed to get to it. Artistic experimentation, the quest for novelty in novel-writing, is more often than not simply a rationale for laziness—a particularly dishonorable escape from the formal demands of making sense.

Amis's opinions, once thoroughly commonplace but now outrageously reactionary, were hard to dismiss because his own craftsmanship was of a very high order. His novels are expertly plotted. The characters—the male characters, anyway—are various and sharply drawn, and they reveal themselves in dialogue that contains not a single false note. The stories move along at such a winning clip that the care taken in writing them is easily obscured—a high compliment, in Amis's view. After the publication of his second novel, *That Uncertain Feeling*, in 1955, Amis wrote to a friend that he had feared some reviewers might call it "sensitive." He was pleased when one instead called it "agreeably unliterary."

Jacobs summarizes what he calls Amis's "literary program":

> The writer must avoid obscurity. He should be amusing—not the same as comic. He must not show off or be pretentious. But neither should he write down to his audience or sink beneath his own intellectual level. . . . If writers can be said to have any common purpose it is above all to communicate with an audience. Throughout his own writing career, Amis always worked with an imaginary audience in his mind, constantly looking over his shoulder and asking them: does this make sense, is it boring, does it work?

This solicitousness underlies every entry in the newly published posthumous volume, *The King's English: A Guide to Modern Usage*. It is inevitably the last book we will get from Amis, and a suitable closer for a long career, full of the prejudices and punctilios that cheered his admirers and infuriated his critics. Even so, it was an odd endeavor for Amis to undertake, since he himself was an idiosyncratic stylist. In prose, as elsewhere, he detested showiness. He once tossed aside a novel by his son Martin, a master manipulator of words, with the comment, "Dear God, can't he write one straightforward sentence?"

Amis's own sentences were not to everyone's liking. In a blistering review of an Amis novel, John Updike wrote: "It is a rare sentence of his prose that surrenders to the demons of language, that abdicates a seat of fussy social judgment, that is there for its own sake, out of simple awe, gratitude, or dismay in the face of creation." What this means (I'm guessing) is that, as a stylist, Amis was not Updikean. He meticulously avoided the rich and gorgeous in favor of the plain and concrete. Here he is, for example, on one little stylistic trick still popular among the hyperliterary, the verbless sentence:

> The short kind (*Night. April in Paris. What rough beast?*), sometimes in a paragraph of its own, will be readily dismissed as a piece of failed modernism, a vulgarity, a passé shock-tactic. The longer version will almost certainly take longer to identify, moving the reader's eye and attention through several lines of print before letting it be seen that there is no main verb within it. . . . In such cases [readers] have been made to pause without profit, and no self-respecting writer should make a reader do that.

This is not to say that his advice is always linguistically conservative. Even more than laziness and ignorance, the enemies of good writing are pomposity and affectation—the desire to be, as he put it, "posher than posh"—and he knew, as God knows and everyone else does, too, that many conservatives wear pomposity like a birthmark. Thus he rails against "anti-split infinitive fanatics" and even defends the use of *role model*, a bugbear of snooty lexicographers everywhere.

As his biographer makes plain, Amis was not a particularly moral man and surely not a likable one. But *The King's English* demonstrates again that he was a likable *writer* and a moral one, too. He believed his obligation to his readers was to give pleasure, and he treated the task with the utmost seriousness. Since there had to be a final Kingsley Amis book, it is fitting that *The King's English* is it. As well as any of his novels, it distills what a pompous critic might call Amis's authorial personality—yet another term that would cause him to reach for his favorite epithet, booming out at top volume. ♦



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# NIXONOMICS

## *Ruining the Economy to Win an Election*

**By David Frum**

Pour a couple drinks into a Republican above a certain age, turn the conversation to politics, and the odds are that sooner or later he will start to grumble about the bad rap Richard Nixon got. The wiretapping didn't start with Nixon, after all—and what were people supposed to do in 1968 anyway? Vote for that blowhard Hubert Humphrey?

With *Nixon's Economy: Booms, Busts, Dollars, & Votes*, Allen Matusow has written a book that should put a halt to that sort of nostalgia. In lucid and vigorous language, Matusow exhaustively demonstrates that Nixon was directly responsible for the worst economic disasters to strike the United States since the Great Depression. In Matusow's telling, Nixon emerges as a politician of almost limitless cynicism. He never believed in the ruinous economic policies he adopted, but he was prepared to debauch the currency, shackle the free market, and up-end the world's trading system in order to buy himself eight years in the Oval Office. And in the end, his scheme backfired with almost Sophoclean tidiness: The economic catastrophe Nixon touched off to win the election of 1972 consumed him in 1974.

There's a moral here somewhere, and Matusow draws it out in a book that is richly researched, subtly argued, and stylishly written. It is one of the finest studies of presidential decision-making we have—maybe the very finest—and along the way it metes out overdue justice to the brave handful within the Nixon administration (George Shultz above all) who kept their heads, honored their principles, and served the nation well. Matusow breathes life into subjects as seemingly dreary as meat-import quotas and natural-gas regulation, reminding us that topics as arcane as these can determine the success or failure of a presidency.

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**Allen J. Matusow**
***Nixon's Economy***
***Booms, Busts, Dollars, & Votes***
Univ. Press of Kansas, 280 pp., $35

When he took office in January 1969, Nixon inherited a mountain of troubles: a country torn by political controversy over a losing war started by his Democratic predecessors and a currency devalued by an inflation aggravated by that war. Daunting as those problems were, they were not beyond solution. After all, the administration that Nixon had served as vice president inherited exactly the same problems in January 1953. And President Eisenhower succeeded both in ending the Democrats' war and snuffing out the Democrats' inflation. In 1969, it's true, both the war and the inflation were worse—but not impossibly worse.

Nixon did manage to extricate almost all U.S. ground forces from Indochina by the end of his third year in office without losing the war. In fact, the repulse of the North Vietnamese invasion of April 1972 seemed to confirm his hope that South Vietnamese ground forces backed by American money and airpower could defeat the Communist army. But the other half of his assignment—righting the economy—Nixon egregiously bungled.

The first order of business was to halt the inflation Kennedy and Johnson had stoked. By the end of 1968, the consumer price index was rising at more than 4 percent a year (up from only about 1 percent in 1961) and the rate of inflation was accelerating. At first, the administration heeded Milton Friedman's urgings and tried to cool the economy gradually. But the problem with gradualism is precisely that it is gradual. Nixon, who keenly felt the precariousness of his political position, wanted big and immediate results.

Nixon had won only 43 percent of the vote in 1968 and carried neither house of Congress with him—the first elected president since Zachary Taylor to begin his administration with both branches of the legislature in the hands of the opposition. Even though Nixon believed that the Democrats had forfeited the confidence of the country on issues of war

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and peace and law and order, he feared that they still owned the pocketbook issues. So his hopes for creating a new political majority depended on a booming economy in 1970 and 1972. And by the end of 1969, it was clear that Friedmanism would not produce the boom he wanted in time to win him his elections.

In fact, by the end of 1969, the economy was slipping into recession—the mildest recession of the postwar era, but still a recession. In November 1970, the Republicans picked up only one Senate seat (rather than the half-dozen for which Nixon had hoped) and lost eleven seats in the House. Nixon decided the time had come to try something new.

At the beginning of 1970, Nixon had installed his old friend Arthur Burns as chairman of the Federal Reserve. Matusow is a vivid portraitist, and his portrayal of Burns is damning. He regards Burns as perhaps the most nakedly partisan chairman ever to lead the Fed and probably the most incompetent. Burns had more or less promised Nixon that he would, if appointed, flood the economy with whatever liquidity it took to elect Republicans in 1970 and '72. Once he got the job, however, he hesitated. Burns understood perfectly well how inflationary Nixon's monetary policy would be. He would only proceed, he decided, if Nixon restrained prices directly. Burns had actually begun to flirt with controls in the fall of 1969; he declared himself openly in a speech to an audience of bankers in May 1970. At the time, Nixon still held to the free-market faith. But over the following months, he and his advisers would gradually succumb to Burns's demand.

One powerful motive for surrender was the disintegrating international position of the dollar. Theoretically, one dollar was worth 1/35 of an ounce of gold in 1970, just as it had been in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s. But as the United States printed up ever more green-tinted paper, it became ever more glaringly obvious that the dollar was worth a lot less. There was no danger that Americans would start showing up at Fort Knox demanding to trade dollars for gold at the $35 price—in those days, it was a very serious crime for U.S. citizens to own monetary gold—but there was nothing to stop foreigners from doing it. America's gold reserves were shrinking month by month as the real purchasing power of the dollar plunged below its legal exchange rate. And as the dollar became ever more overvalued, American exports suffered and imports surged. In 1971, the United States posted its first merchandise trade deficit since 1893.

By 1971, Nixon was looking for solutions to three problems: the trade balance, the dollar crisis, and Arthur Burns's reluctance to print the money needed for a boom unless Nixon produced some sort of price controls. With the help of his evil genius, Treasury secretary John Connally, he convinced himself in August that he had found them. On August 15, 1971, Nixon announced the most stunning turnabout in American economic policy since 1933. He froze wages and prices for ninety days, imposed a 10 percent surcharge on all imports, and refused any longer to exchange gold for dollars at the $35 rate.

**IT TOOK A DECADE FOR THE UNITED STATES TO RECOVER FROM NIXON'S FINANCIAL MISADMINISTRATION.**

In the short term, the plan worked. A delighted Arthur Burns started the printing presses rolling at the Mint, and Nixon got his 1972 boom—and 61 percent of the vote. What he also got, however, was double-digit inflation in 1973-74, an energy shortage, the collapse of the international monetary system, and the worst economic slump since 1940. The president would have to resort to ever more desperate and extreme methods to contain the disaster he had triggered: a fantastic national scheme of centralized control over energy supplies (Nixon himself compared energy czar William Simon to Albert Speer—and meant it, as only Nixon would, as a compliment); more price controls culminating in a second freeze in 1973; and endless rounds of negotiations to try to relink the dollar to the Japanese yen and the German mark at more realistic levels. It all failed miserably. The Watergate scandal struck a White House already politically crippled by economic disaster.

It took a decade for the United States to recover from Nixon's misadministration. Ronald Reagan accepted a fierce two-year recession to squeeze out the inflation Nixon had fed and abolished the price controls that had made the energy shortage possible. He slowed the growth in domestic spending that Nixon had tolerated and cut the tax rates that Nixon's inflation had made so onerous. By the mid-1980s, the value of the dollar had stabilized at home and abroad and the economy was again growing without inflation. It was a breathtaking, if imperfect, achievement. And at every step along the way, Reagan was accused—often by economists who had abetted the Nixon debacle—of ideological fanaticism, of rigidity, of refusing to heed the wise counsel of the sensible center.

Nothing quite equals the scorn of self-described "practical men" for advocates of free markets. The free marketeers, the practical men complain, are zealots who fail to reckon with the world as it really is. Free trade, solid money, balanced budgets, low and loophole-free tax rates: These might all be good in theory. But in practice, the hardheaded leader must be willing to jettison ide-



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ology to get the job done. And no politician ever took as much pride in his practicality as Richard Nixon. Again and again, Matusow quotes him chiding free marketeers by telling them, "There are no votes in it."

Nixon, however, was wrong. His clever flexibility proved spectacularly impractical both for the country and for himself. Reagan's free-market dogmatism turned out to be the most pragmatic policy of them all. ♦

# VIRTUES AT WORK

## *Six Who Changed Our Time*

**By Terry Eastland**

In *Great Souls*, David Aikman has assembled brief biographies of six modern figures, all but one of whom are still living: Billy Graham, Nelson Mandela, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II, and Elie Wiesel. Each of these six has indeed "changed the century," and for the better.

**David Aikman**
***Great Souls***
***Six Who Changed the Century***
Word, 352 pp., $22.99

But Aikman, who for many years covered international affairs for *Time* magazine, is not content simply to detail the lives and salute the remarkable achievements of these eminent persons. Rather, his intention lies in showing how each life, as he puts it, "has demonstrated one overriding human quality, or preoccupation, or virtue, more than any other." Thus, for Aikman, Graham's life is centrally about "salvation," Mandela's "forgiveness," Solzhenitsyn's "truth," Mother Teresa's "compassion," John Paul's "human dignity," and Wiesel's "remembrance." Except perhaps in the case of Mandela, it is hard to disagree with these assessments.

Billy Graham, for example, has obviously been preoccupied with spreading the message of salvation, for he has always and everywhere been a preacher who preaches Christ. Aikman adduces some telling statistics: Between 1950 and 1997, Graham preached 206 crusades in America and 182 abroad. These have not been parochial crusades, Aikman points out, since Graham has included as co-workers in his evangelistic efforts both liberal and conservative Protestants, as well as Roman Catholics. Graham has thus united—to further the gospel message—Christians who otherwise have strong doctrinal disagreements. Graham also has gone to great lengths to protect his ability to preach that message credibly by fashioning rules that guard against the common ministerial temptations of money, sex, and glory.

Upon receiving the Nobel Prize in 1974, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn declared that "one word of truth shall outweigh the whole world." His great preoccupation has indeed been to write the truth—the reality of communism as Solzhenitsyn and other Russians brutally experienced it. It can fairly be said that, beginning with the publication in 1962 of *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, his truth-telling was of first importance in helping set the Russian people free. "By turns sardonically funny, anguished, or burning in slow fury," writes Aikman, "Solzhenitsyn accomplished something truly rare in all literature, the moral impaling of an entire political system with sustained literary power."

Mother Teresa was, of course, compassionate to the poor, the handicapped, and the dying. Yet Aikman's profile of Mother Teresa, the best of the six, provides better reasons for concluding that her overriding virtue was not simply the compassion that Aikman sees, but something broader—love: love of man and love of God. Aikman comes close to recognizing the first half of this when he invokes a Greek word for love, *agape*, in discussing Mother Teresa's compassion. She certainly gave up her life to help the "poorest of the poor." But she was not just preoccupied with Jesus' second commandment, to love thy neighbor, but even more his first, which is to love God with all of one's heart and soul and mind. At the age of twelve, a young Albanian girl named Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu, she told her family that she wanted "to belong wholly to God." She thought and prayed for six years, Aikman relates, before leaving her family and her native Albania to belong wholly to God. Her new life as a missionary to the poor of Calcutta and beyond followed, but even as she loved her neighbors she also loved God. In Oslo to accept a Nobel in 1979, she told journalists that her heart belonged "entirely to the heart of Jesus."

Pope John Paul II, born Karol Wojtyla in Poland, is the most complex figure treated in this book (and the one most admired by the author, who calls him "the greatest single Christian leader of the twentieth century"). "Of all our Great Souls," writes Aikman, "the pope is surely the most universal in the range of

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his experience, the extent of his travels and interests, the breadth of his conception of life." Yet Aikman's assessment of John Paul as centrally concerned throughout his life with human dignity is one that fits this multi-dimensional figure well enough. As Aikman points out, John Paul as a young man living in a Europe tortured by Nazism and communism came to understand that these philosophies, in opposition to his own faith, did not recognize human beings as people, much less as creatures of God Himself, bearing His image. As pope, John Paul has centered many of his writings and sermons on the human person and the need to assert and protect its irreducible worth. And his preoccupation with the defense of the individual has ranged across a wide variety of subjects—abortion and euthanasia, war, capitalism, democracy, and human rights.

Elie Wiesel, survivor of the Holocaust, is about nothing if not remembrance—unless it is also reconstruction. "My goal is always the same," he once said, "to invoke the past as a shield for the future; to show the invisible world of yesterday and through it, perhaps on it, erect a moral world where men are not victims and children never starve and never run in fear." Wiesel's only book about the Holocaust was his first one, *Night*, but his subsequent novels and writings have, as Aikman points out, alluded to it or its consequences in the lives of individuals. Aikman recounts what an SS officer told young Wiesel upon his arrival at Auschwitz: "Remember it forever. Engrave it into your minds. You are at Auschwitz. And Auschwitz is not a convalescent home. It's a concentration camp." Wiesel has indeed remembered.

The reader of Aikman's *Great Souls* is left, then, with Nelson Mandela, who fought apartheid before being imprisoned for crimes against the state from 1964 to 1990, only to see the demise of the old system and, in 1994, his election as president of a constitutional democracy in which blacks and whites have the same rights. His is a remarkable story.

Yet, even as related here, it invites a different assessment as to Mandela's overriding preoccupation or virtue, which Aikman says is forgiveness—specifically Mandela's forgiveness of white South Africans since his release from prison.

Aikman says this virtue is not genuine if something is demanded in return, and it seems odd to say that Mandela's forgiveness has been demandless, extended as it has been in a practical context in which he plainly has wanted to effect major political changes. But even if Mandela's forgiveness is of the sort Aikman defines, it has not been the virtue or preoccupation that most distinguishes the man. Rather, freedom—the liberty of a people degraded by apartheid—would seem to be his great preoccupation. And perseverance in behalf of that freedom for twenty-seven years of imprisonment seems his great virtue.

There are occasions in *Great Souls* when one wishes for more analysis from Aikman—of the theological vitality of the "New Evangelicalism" that he rightly credits Graham with establishing; of Solzhenitsyn's famous critique of the West, delivered as a commencement speech at Harvard in 1978; or of the ideas elaborated by Pope John Paul II, an intellectual of high distinction. But Aikman deserves credit for writing biographies that not only are reliable and highly readable but also—because of the figures he chose to write about—morally elevating.

This is a fine accomplishment, and it can be credited to the fact that Aikman is both a journalist for secular media and a believing Christian. His book, however, is not precisely a book about believers (Wiesel's attitude toward God, for example, is hard to nail down). Nor is his book precisely about spiritual things (such as salvation, in Graham's case) or the distinctively Christian virtues (such as love, in Teresa's). Ultimately, *Great Souls* is about commendable qualities that people of any religious commitment, or even of none at all, can and should recognize. ♦

# Allen Drury, 1918-1998

## *Remembering* Advise and Consent

**By Kenneth Y. Tomlinson**

The year was 1961—an incredible time for a sixteen-year-old kid to be a magazine intern in Washington, D.C.

At old Griffith Stadium, I saw Roger Maris hit a home run on his way past Babe Ruth's record. I watched John Kennedy masterfully toy with reporters at a presidential news conference. Once, during a convention at the Mayflower Hotel, a teenage campaign worker confided to me that she had shared intimate moments with newly elected Texas senator John Tower.

Then one day, I met (in truth I should say exchanged greetings with) actor Charles Laughton as he exited an elevator on the Senate side of the

*Kenneth Y. Tomlinson retired as editor in chief of* Reader's Digest *in 1996.*



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Capitol. He was in Washington that summer to do the movie version of Allen Drury's novel *Advise and Consent*. At the time, I considered that moment easily the high point of the summer.

Allen Drury died on September 2, at the age of eighty. Looking back thirty-seven years, I find it difficult to explain—to a generation that has never heard of Laughton or Drury or maybe even of *Advise and Consent*—exactly why that sixteen-year-old I used to be felt so elated. The aging, rotund Laughton was no Tom Cruise. The part he played was hardly the stuff of a 1990s hero. Or even a 1980s hero. In the film, he played old Seab Cooley, the wily southern senator who would orchestrate the defeat of "elitist" (as in, soft on communism) Robert Leffingwell's nomination to be secretary of state.

But at the time this was hot stuff—and nothing was hotter than *Advise and Consent*, the novel that Drury wrote while he covered the Senate in the 1950s for the *New York Times*. To many of us, the book represented the enticing allure of the Washington power game that would keep us in and around Washington for a lifetime. Peggy Noonan noted in her memoir *What I Saw at the Revolution* that every baby boomer in the Reagan White House had read *Advise and Consent* and at least one other of Drury's novels: "We had read them in the '60s, when we were young, and they were part of the reason we were here."

Published in 1960, *Advise and Consent* remained on the bestseller list for 103 weeks—an astonishing longevity record. Drury won a Pulitzer prize and in the process gave birth to the modern Washington novel. A seemingly endless succession of novels followed the ground plowed by *Advise and Consent*, culminating in 1974 with Woodward and Bernstein's *All the President's Men* (which may or may not have been non-fiction).

Today we have C-SPAN and MSNBC and Rush Limbaugh, and it's difficult to remember there was a time when the nation functioned without a non-stop focus on Washington. This is one reason that Drury's work was extraordinary. It may have been a slow read, but it was terrifically insightful—and watching crafty old Seab Cooley bring down the beloved liberal icon Bob Leffingwell was another factor in making this book so magnificent to so many of us. As Drury put it, "Bob Leffingwell could mobilize the Washington press corps on his side on any given issue. . . . A protective screen of press adulation hung between him and large portions of the public. . . . Certain phrases [had come to be attached to him]: 'a truly liberal mind . . . a profound and perceptive approach to the problems of government.'" In fact, the only thing Drury disliked more than a wimpy, soft-line politician was a liberal columnist. By the end of the novel, even Leffingwell's liberal admirers could not save him.

Associated Press

*Allen Drury in 1961.*

The hard Left, in turn, hated Allen Drury. Pamela Hansford Johnson once wrote in the *New Statesman* that *Advise and Consent* is "politically repellent and artistically null with a steady hysterical undertone."

It would be nice to be able to blame some kind of conspiracy of the Left for the fact that Drury never wrote another novel that approached the significance of *Advise and Consent*. But though he did retain a hard-core following, it can be argued that the eighteen novels and the five works of nonfiction he produced in the four decades between the publication of his one classic and his death deserve to remain, for the most part, little noticed nor long remembered.

Of course, in the years following *Advise and Consent*, the nation endured everything from Vietnam to Watergate before it learned from the Reagan Revolution the profoundest of lessons about Washington: Government is not the solution. Government is the problem. As the critic Terry Teachout observed in a superb piece on Drury a few years back, "Drury is doing business at the same old stand. Unfortunately for him, the highway has moved."

Still, *Advise and Consent* remains a great popular novel. The Seab Cooleys that Drury revered may no longer populate Congress, but their blow-dried successors would do well to dust off the grand old book and reacquaint themselves with the consequences of equivocation and moral relativism. There they might find a solution to their quandary over what to do about Bill Clinton. ♦



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# Parody

# 62!

## Clinton Breaks Kennedy Mark

By Peter Gammons
GLOBE STAFF

WASHINGTON, D.C.—William Jefferson Clinton slunk into the study adjoining the Oval Office last night and stepped into history, ruining a record 62nd cocktail dress and shattering the mark that had stood unchallenged since the first year of the Kennedy administration.

The dress was retrieved by a jubilant Bayani Nelvis, a young steward who claims he has been in the White House during 48 of the president's 62 "homers."

"It feels great to be part of history," said Mr. Nelvis, who said he would forgo a $1 million reward offered by an anonymous donor (rumored to be Arthur Schlesinger Jr.) and would be giving the dress back to presidential secretary Betty Currie. "That seems to be the protocol around here," explained Mr. Nelvis, who said he hopes the historic garment will eventually be displayed at the Smithsonian.

Relaxing with an unlit cigar, the president expressed relief that the chase was finally over. "This is something I used to dream about, sophomore year in high school," the president said. "And it's been a heck of a summer. It's brought fathers and sons closer together across the country. If it helps acquaint 5- and 6-year-olds with the facts of life, then I think I've done my part."

What heartened Clinton most was that he broke the record on the birthday of William

*(see CIGAR, p. C4)*

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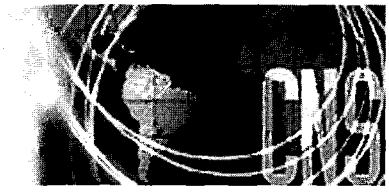


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